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LAVINIA.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "DOCTOR ANTONIO."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1861.

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L A V I N I A.

CHAPTER I.

The Studio.

IN a painter's studio, in Via Frattina, Rome, a young man was sitting astride a chair, his elbows resting upon its back, his chin on his crossed hands, his eyes riveted to a canvas on an easel opposite to him. It was a large canvas, containing no less than six full-length figures in the foreground (the background was scarcely chalked out), four of them nearly finished. The chief one of this group was a warrior in the garb of ancient Gaul, dismounting from a fiery steed, and in the act of throwing his sword into the one of two scales, already containing iron weights, the other being full of gold.

The young painter gazed at this group with anything but complacency. Indeed, his strikingly handsome features wore such a vivid expression of disappointment and annoyance, as to be painful to behold.

Presently, after a knock which was either unheard or unheeded, the door of the studio opened, and admitted a tall, commanding, and we scarcely dare add, middle-aged gentleman. He might be fifty, he might be thirty years of age. His shortcut, almost white hair and beard, went as far to support the first hypothesis, as the second was rendered plausible by the still youth-

ful character of his face — a fine, handsome, pensive face, colourless as though the battle of life had left no drop of blood in the veins of the owner. That he had fought, was evidenced by two deep channels, worn by care at each corner of the mouth. He was plainly and soberly dressed, and with a greater regard to personal ease and comfort than to fashion, as might be inferred from the ample folds of his dark trousers and a flowing upper garment, half-coat half-cloak. Round his throat was a bit of black silk, worn cravat-wise, but so narrow that it was scarcely visible under the turned-down collar of a shirt exquisitely fine and white.

It was not easy to determine at once to what country he belonged. So far as his style of dress, his pale countenance, and his unshaven beard (scanty, it must be owned) were concerned, he might have been taken for one born on the Continent; but there was in his carriage, in his bearing, in the whole habit of his body, an individuality, a touch of raciness and originality, *sui generis*, which rarely falls to the lot of Continental people. The soundest conjecture seemed to be that he was a native of Great Britain, who had lived long abroad. At least, the way he held out his hand, and the hearty squeeze he gave to that of the young painter, were unmistakeably English. Had they invented nothing but this "shaking hands," the English would still be a great people.

"Good morning, Paolo; been hard at work, eh? that's a good boy. I guessed as much from not seeing you last evening. Now then, let's see. Heyday! three new figures almost done in a sitting!" and the visitor fumbled in his waistcoat pocket for the least showy of eye-glasses.

"It is not worth looking at," said Paolo, dejectedly. "I had it all here last night," and he struck his forehead with his fist; "I laid me down in my kennel in the belief that I should do wonders to-day. Got up early; worked away; and all to no purpose. I have it all here," with another knock on his forehead, "but I cannot bring it forth."

"Nonsense," said the tall gentleman, who by this time had fixed his eye-glass, and was examining by its help the canvas on the easel; "your front group is done in gallant style; let me tell you it is very good."

"I expected you to say something of the sort. You perceive that I am discouraged, and you want to comfort me. But in your heart of hearts you know that what I have done is neither more nor less than a failure."

"As true as my name is Mortimer, I know no such thing. When I say that it is very good, I mean what I say."

"In that case," interrupted Paolo, snappishly, "you are less of an artist than I gave you credit for."

"Be it so," said with a quiet smile the other, who had announced his name to be Mortimer; "but let me finish what I was going to say; and that was, I understand perfectly well you are not and cannot be satisfied with your performance. Mediocrity often is; it is one of the privileges of genius never to be so."

"That is a privilege," said Paolo, "supposing I were a genius, I could renounce without breaking my heart. Rather call it a doom than a privilege."

"Call it what you like," was Mortimer's answer;

"you can no more renounce it than any other part of what constitutes yourself. Privilege or doom, it has its high purpose. Suppress in fact, this stimulus to an indefinite improvement, this everlasting yearning after something better still than what has been achieved, be it ever so good — this unceasing call for new efforts and exertions — and you suppress the root and foundation of all human excellence. Can you conceive a man born of woman, sitting before his work, and saying, God-like, 'It is very good'?"

"Certainly not," said Paolo; "you can't think me such a fool as to expect from man what is alone the attribute of God — perfection. What I deplore and find fault with, is my utter inability to reproduce that ideal, imperfect though it may be, which is so clearly present to my mind's eye."

"As if the very nature of things did not account for this discrepancy between your conception and its embodiment," observed Mortimer. "Where is the wonder if your ideal, a pure speculation of the mind, gets somewhat dimmed in the process it must needs pass through, to become a sensible reality? Where's the wonder, if the spiritual, in assuming the material garb, loses something of its effulgence? I have heard you allow this a score of times."

"I daresay you have, I daresay you are right, and I daresay I am wrong," returned Paolo, in a tone of increased desolation. "The result is there, and it proves that I have not the stuff in me of a good painter. I wish I were a drawing master, still hiring out my pencil at two paoli an hour. I had none of these mental battles then. I am sick of them. I was happy; but ever since you inoculated me with ambition, ever since you took

it into your head to turn me into an historical painter, I have not had an hour's rest."

The two deep furrows about the Englishman's mouth quivered, while the tone of his voice, hitherto gentle and affectionate, sharpened with a slight bitterness, as he said, "Pray curse me at once then."

"I!" exclaimed Paolo, like one startled out of a dream.

"Yes," pursued the Englishman; "curse me as the cause of all your distress. But for me, would you not be happy? I am accustomed to such repayment. Go on, cur —"

Paolo sprang towards his friend, clasped both his hands within his own, and looking into Mortimer's eyes with his friendly ones, exclaimed, "Curse you! Are you mad, Mortimer? Curse you, my friend, my second father! How can you say such horrible words? Don't mind my stupid ways, don't think me ungrateful — you must not! I would do anything to please you. Try me. Say the word, and I will fling myself headforemost into the street. Just try me!" And there Paolo stood, ashy pale, with trembling hands, and eyes full of tears — a very picture of passionate grief.

Mortimer's flash of anger or sudden shock of pain, or the combination of the two, at the reproachful regrets of his friend, was happily not so intense as to require for its cure that rather heroic and eccentric sedative, — a somersault from a third story into Via Frattina — proposed by the offender. He contented himself with saying good-humouredly: "Ah well! always in extremes. However, it will be so, I suppose, to the end of the chapter. So, now, cheer up, and let me hear what it is that you find fault with in this group."

"By and by I will tell you," said Paolo, who found it difficult to master his emotion at once. "Always in extremes — yes, you are right; I am ashamed of myself. If you would only fret, and fume, and storm a little for company's sake, it would be a consolation. But no; you take things so coolly; nothing can stir you out of your provoking British phlegm."

"British phlegm, indeed!" repeated the Englishman, with a laugh. "How many times have I not told you that our British phlegm is an article, just like many others labelled English, of purely Continental fabrication! I wish you could just have a peep of our House of Commons sometimes, of our railway stations always, or of our crowds, to form an idea of what our phlegm is like. Why, my dear sir, we are lucifer matches, — cannot be touched without bursting into a blaze. A new singer, a patriot, Tom Thumb, the hippopotamus, spirit-rapping, movement cure — why, everybody and everything sets us on fire. Ah! ah! phlegmatic indeed! We are the rashest, the most excitable, blundering, enthusiastic set of animals under the sun; burning Etnas under a coat of ice: with us life is a race, a storm: pleasure, business, virtue, vice, we overdo everything. Statesmen, students, authors, artists, work at high pressure and die of overtasked brains. Drunkenness itself changes nature and name with us, and becomes delirium."

Paolo lacked both the data upon which to dispute or confirm the accuracy of Mortimer's statements, and the disposition to do either, even had he possessed the data; for, if it was one of the Englishman's crotchets to express opinions about his country and countrymen sometimes little complimentary, more often oddly at

variance with all current notions, — it was another of his crotchets also, to allow nobody to echo or contradict him on such reserved topics; just like a fond mother, who scolds a naughty darling, and shrinks equally from being opposed or agreed with.

"Now come," resumed this crusty Mortimer after a pause, during which he had closely surveyed Paolo's picture, "what objection have you to your Brennus? He looks to me a very fine fellow."

"You will think me hypercritical," answered Paolo, "if I say that his action to my eyes does not appear characteristic enough of the deed he is doing."

"In other words," retorted the other, "you quarrel with him for not articulating distinctly the celebrated *Væ victis!* You could put a slip of paper in his mouth with the words on it, as many of the old painters did. Jestings apart, let me tell you, my dear friend, that Art has limits of its own, beyond which there is only chaos and confusion. When a painter has brought out, clearly and powerfully, the passions characteristic of the deed the hero is about — savage scorn and covetousness in the present case — the intent and purpose of Art is satisfied. We may dismiss Brennus, and pass on to Sulpitius. What is wrong with him?"

Paolo hesitated for an instant, then said, —

"Sulpitius looks stiff, he wants naturalness and simplicity."

"There is some truth in what you say," remarked the Englishman, after a little consideration. "It is the strait waistcoat of allegory, into which a misplaced patriotism has forced your subject, which gives to Sulpitius and Co. — not to Brennus, though there genius

has got the upper hand of conventionality — which gives to your personages, I say, that somewhat constrained air, and to the ensemble that something at variance with the notions the real action represented would naturally suggest to our mind. Simplicity in execution presupposes simplicity in the conception; and yours is one of composite order, if ever there was one — men, in fact, and passions two thousand years old, and men and passions of to-day, in juxtaposition. You know that I objected from the first to this unnatural combination of two such discordant epochs and elements. Had you had the courage to wipe out of your canvas the modern element, which mars the ancient, there is no saying what might have been your success. Even as it is, take my word for it, it is a good picture, and Brennus a fine fellow."

Paolo at first remained silent, as though weighing Mortimer's arguments, then said, —

"I have witnessed an act of great injustice; I possess neither the club of Hercules with which to slay lions or hydras, nor the sinews of Samson to pull down the pillars of the temple. I have but my palette and brush: I use the only weapons I possess to brand a great injustice. Ought that to be imputed to me as a fault?"

"God forbid that I should do so," returned Mortimer. "I respect the feeling which guided your pencil; what I question is the expediency of indulging that feeling with no likely prospect of furthering art, or your fame."

Paolo made no answer; he arranged his palette, and set himself diligently to work. Mortimer watched in silence the progress of his friend's brush.

CHAPTER II.

Par Nobile Fratrum.

PAOLO was the son of Orazio Mancini, a country gentleman.

The road between Viterbo and Montefiascone, runs through a desolate volcanic region, frequently intersected by ravines and gorges. In one of these gorges, more dreary, if possible, than the others, lies hidden a grim and miserable-looking village, called from a number of small waterfalls in its vicinity, "Cascatelle." In this secluded spot, the birthplace of the Mancini, Paolo's father had inherited a large massive mansion, and a tract of land more than sufficient to maintain a numerous family in affluence, had the produce of it been in any way proportionate to its extent. But the soil was volcanic and refractory to cultivation, so that Orazio's considerable estate yielded him just enough, with strict economy, to make the two ends meet.

Orazio Mancini, a man of simple and frugal habits, had also an active and adventurous disposition. While studying medicine at Rome, he had busied himself much with geology and mineralogy, and from the configuration and composition of the mountainous district around Cascatelle, it seemed to him that he had every right to augur the existence of beds of coal. A good deal of his time was accordingly spent in exploring the country thereabouts, with the view of wrenching forth the secret of its hidden treasure.

The only path from Cascatelle to the heights, the usual field of Orazio's investigations, lay by the Rocca, a huge mound of unpicturesque ruins, commanding the

road at a hundred paces from the village, and once the seigniorial residence of the Rodipani. Of noble birth, high pretensions, and small fortune, the Rodipani had from time immemorial resided at Rome, where they had won for themselves the well-merited praise of being the most indefatigable and successful place-hunters and sponges on the public ever known.

Faithful to family tradition, the last marquis and his younger brother had thrown themselves on the State, the former as one of the Pope's Guardia Nobile, the latter as assistant-segreto to one of the prelate auditors of the sacred Roman Rota. Activity, perseverance, ductility, parsimony, spirit of intrigue, power of dissimulation — in none of the qualities necessary in an aspiring priest was Assistant Rodipani wanting, and accordingly he increased in dignity and wealth; while his elder brother, the unambitious, hot-headed, warm-hearted Guardia Nobile, who would have his joke, though at the expense of his Holiness himself, got more reprimands and arrests than promotion, and was at last cashiered for insubordination.

Though wanting in judgment, the marquis was by no means deficient in feeling, and, like most hasty-tempered persons, once the first heat was over, could listen to reason when kindly and gently administered. But kindness and gentleness were not, at least as far as his brother was concerned, among the Christian virtues of the late assistant-segreto, now Canon Rodipani. From earliest boyhood the harshness of manners and assumption of superiority in his brother, had irritated the marquis, and the ill-will then engendered between them had grown with their growth, strengthened with their strength. People indeed used to say of the

younger Rodipani, that he visited on his elder brother the sin of being the first-born. Be this as it may, high was the wrath of the canon, and highly intemperate the words in which he expressed it, at the news of what he styled the disgrace of the family. The ex-Guardia Nobile snapped his fingers at "the family," declared with an oath that he would not be bullied by the tonsure, and went his way.

For more than a twelvemonth the brothers were as good as dead to each other. At the expiration of that period, the marquis received a request for an interview from the canon, who, stiff, cold, and formal as a judge, stated how — not at all from any personal regard, but from respect for the name they both bore — he had sought and found a means of raising the marquis from the abyss of self-degradation into which he had plunged. This means was, of course, a good marriage; which meant fifty years ago, as it does now-a-days, a rich marriage. Fancy the pleasure of the listener at a communication so kindly based, and so sentimentally worded. "He saw in it," answered the marquis through his clenched teeth, "a new proof of that brotherly solicitude to which he had already been so indebted. Though he regretted that he could not fully gratify this fraternal interest, still he rejoiced that the disappointment would be qualified. He, by a strange sympathy, had also thought of marriage as a means of salvation, and he was now actually on the eve of entering the holy state of matrimony."

"Doubtless," observed the canon, with a sneer, "the bride elect was worthy of the preference given her by such a connoisseur. Might he inquire the

name of the fortunate mortal who was to be his sister-in-law?"

The reply was, that his reverence might become acquainted with it, if he chose, next Sunday at the parish church of Santa Sabina, where the banns were to be published.

The banns were published, and the name of the future marchioness, the daughter of a small tradesman, was divulged from the pulpit to the gossip of all Rome. In spite of the canon's opposition, the marriage took place, and in spite of the sneering prognostications of the gossips, a fortunate one it proved. The marquis had secured what he very greatly needed — a guide; and he who had revolted under the sway of an imperious master, now willingly submitted to the gentle guidance of a sensible and affectionate wife.

Years passed, and things went on smoothly and pleasantly with our couple. Not that the husband had grown steady; he was one destined to a perpetual childhood; but the wife was steady enough for two; and whenever he stumbled, which was the rule and not the exception, there was one by his side with a firm hand to hold him up. Alas! that a day should come when that strong, faithful hand was stiff and cold, and could help him no more. Such a day came after eleven years of wedlock.

The grief of the bereaved husband had all the violence of a tornado. If his constitution did not break altogether, or his reason give way under the shock, as feared at first, he certainly came out of it a much older and weaker-minded man. Lonely and dispirited, he turned for cheering and consolation to certain quarters,

where he was sure to find misery and self-abasement — to old associates and old haunts — to the bottle and the gaming-table. There was no lack of rogues and cheats of both sexes to encourage him in his career of extravagance, and to make merry at his expense; no lack of usurers to supply funds for his follies. So that he could raise money, he never cared at what sacrifice. The upshot of all this was what it naturally would be. The Marquis Rodipani awoke one morning a ruined man. His vineyard at Ferentino, his cascina near Fermo, the very house he lived in; in short, the only possessions he had worth the taking, were in the hands of his creditors. They left him only that which they had neither the power nor the inclination to take — his entailed property at Cascatelle, consisting of a mansion in ruins, and a tract of unprofitable land, mortgaged for double its value, and the rent of which was equal to zero.

Thus driven to the wall, the marquis had not a moment's hesitation in applying for help — so dead was he by this time to all sense of shame and self-respect — to that brother from whom he had lived estranged for the last sixteen years. He wrote to him accordingly, and received a reply, such as the precedents of Canon, now Bishop *in partibus*, Rodipani, would warrant one to expect. It ran thus: "Your avowal that you are a beggar does not surprise me. I never expected you to end otherwise. My only wonder is, that you have taken so long to arrive at such a conclusion. Deliver Rome and me instantly from the disgrace of your presence, and retire to Cascatelle. On your complying with this condition, and

to preserve the name you bear from further degradation, I will then settle on you a small annuity."

The marquis, in a foaming rage, despatched forthwith a counter-demand, couched thus: "I reject with scorn your ultimatum, and give you mine. If within three days from this date I have not your bond for a monthly payment of sixty scudi, secured to me for life, I will bring down the name of Rodipani so low, as to make it indeed an opprobrium to all who bear it. I take G— to witness that I will."

There being no bond forthcoming within the time specified, the marquis set about fulfilling his threat. That remainder of decorum, which well-born and well-bred debauchees never entirely renounce, even in their days of most unbridled licence, he now utterly disregarded. He frequented the haunts of the lowest rabble, selecting as his companions the vilest of the refuse of Rome. Pipe in mouth, and in rags, he would parade the Corso, or pace the Pincio, arm in arm with recognized blacklegs, or the most abandoned of the other sex. Nor was his rage after self-degradation satisfied by such daily exhibitions. People got accustomed to them, and they missed their effect. He must and would finish off with a *coup d'éclat*. What do you think he did? He volunteered his services to the manager of the Tordinona theatre, and actually appeared on the stage as one of the choreographic corps in the ballet. The scandal was as immense as he could have desired; all Rome flocked to see the *début* of Marquis Rodipani. An order from the minister of police, sued for and easily obtained by Bishop Rodipani, put an end to the disgraceful display. The new

débutant was enjoined to leave Rome within eight and forty hours, and proceed to Cascatelle. Promises, entreaties, expostulations were of no avail; willingly or unwillingly, go he must.

Let man do what he will to deface himself, yet the hand of Him in whose image he is made will be traceable in some corner or other of his being. Such was the case with that lump of cynicism and selfishness which went under the name of Marquis Rodipani. Even he had his badge of our divine origin, his redeeming point, in the tender passionate love he bore to his darling daughter. Bianca was the eldest and the only surviving of his three children. Only a few months previous to, and as if in prescience of her approaching end, the fond mother had insisted on sending her little girl to the convent of Santa Chiara, there to receive her education. The child had been an inmate of that house for six years, and never once, during these six years — no, not even at the culminating point of his follies and extravagance — had her father failed to go and see her on any of the weekly parlour days, ministering to her little wants and comforts, telling her how fondly he loved her, and of the saint she had in heaven in her blessed mother.

In her seclusion, Bianca knew nothing of her father but what he chose to show of himself, and that was well calculated to endear him to her. His care, then, well requited at all times, was never more so than now, when he came to confide to her the bad tidings, with an accompaniment of sobs and sighs, that she would see him no more, that he had come to bid her farewell. The poor young thing was quite upset by such news. Why must he go away? and if he really must, why

could she not go with him? The selfish man caught eagerly at this notion; in fact, what was there to prevent her? she was his own child after all. His conscience, however, bade him hint at the dreariness of Cascatelle — such a dull place for a girl of fourteen! “It could scarcely be duller than the convent,” said Bianca; and then, what did she care for the place, so long as she was with him? In short, father and daughter being of one mind, they at once sought an interview with the mother abbess. To the reverend lady Marquis Rodipani detailed his plan of residing for the future in the country, adding that his daughter being willing to accompany him, he had come to claim her. Bianca simply and firmly declared her determination to be her father’s companion.

The mother abbess naturally started many objections. Bianca had not yet finished her education, Bianca was too young to decide for herself; at all events, the abbess could not permit her to go, without first consulting the proper authorities. The marquis wished to know what authority the lady placed above that of a father in this case. The abbess replied by obscure hints about fathers who had by their conduct forfeited their authority. At this, Marquis Rodipani lost patience, and went straight to the minister of police. “I am ready to leave Rome,” said the marquis, “but I must first have my daughter.” The high functionary disclaimed all intention of interfering with paternal rights, beyond ascertaining what were the real wishes of the young lady, and that should be done through the intervention of a most unexceptionable person.

The unexceptionable medium proved to be Bishop Rodipani, who no sooner was acquainted with the matter,

than he went in great haste to the convent. Skilful cross-questionings, adroit cajoleries, obscure warnings, overt menaces, all that the combined diplomacy of an abbess and a bishop could contrive, and bring to bear on a child of fourteen to frighten or persuade, that child stood for hours, without faltering, without for a moment swerving from her determination. "I go of my own free will," she said; "he is my father." A simple statement, which has its weight in the mouth of a man's child. The bishop *in partibus* and the mother abbess felt this, and yielded. The marquis carried off his Bianca in triumph. Thus they came and settled themselves at Cascatelle — not in the ruined mansion, a habitation fit only for bats and owls, but in the little homestead close by. There they lived on a small allowance doled out to them by the bishop; Bianca, the clever child housekeeper, maintaining by her activity and energy an element of order and comfort round them; the old dotard, her father, cursing *in petto* his brother, and wasting his time in devising idle plans for annoying that brother.

CHAPTER III.

Anticipated by the Reader.

THE marquis and his daughter had been living at the farm for nearly five years, when Orazio Mancini, on his father's death, had to give up his studies at Rome, and come and settle at Cascatelle. Now, on his excursions, whether in going to or returning from the heights, Orazio had no choice but to pass by the humble dwelling of the Rodipani; and as the old marquis —

(for, though scarcely fifty at that time, he was so bent and so white-haired that he looked seventy) — well, as the old marquis used to sit for hours together on a wooden bench by the door, sunning himself, it was next to impossible that Orazio could pass unobserved. Naturally, the usual courteous salutations were exchanged, and more than once had the "Good morning, marquis," from the young man, in response to the "Good day, doctor," from the marquis, elicited from the latter something like "Confound the marquise," or "It is tin I want, not titles;" that is, the irate old nobleman used Italian phrases equivalent to these English ones. The words were muttered, not openly articulated, lest *she* should overhear him.

In the course of time the passing greetings lengthened into short conversations. Orazio, as being the only inhabitant of Cascatelle who took the official *Gazette* of Rome, would stop a few minutes to give the news. The marquis would now and then ask, in a confidential whisper, if there were no casualties among the higher clergy; no apoplexies from the heat of the weather; no spirited carriage-horses running away, and dashing out the holy brains of some bishop *in partibus*. Again, there was a change. From conversing while standing, the doctor (so called by courtesy) was invited to converse seated; and, to make a long story short, by the end of the year of his first settling at Cascatelle, Orazio had become a daily visitor at the farm of "La Rocca," Bianca's friend, and Marquis Rodipani's physician, first adviser, and confidant.

Bianca was, by this time, a beautiful girl of twenty, sensible, calm, uncommonly serious for her age. She had that sort of spiritual beauty which does not lie on

the surface, but shines forth from within, the emanation of a pure, lofty soul. Her tall, slender figure, jet-black hair, large jet-black eyes, and alabaster complexion, gave her an unearthly look — the look, Orazio could not help thinking, of an early Christian virgin-martyr. The villagers likened her to the Madonna, and stood hat in hand as she passed. There was something holy and purifying in her mere presence, which acted mysteriously on all who saw her, and the soft spell of which her father, half in his dotage as he was, felt and submitted to. The marquis had become quite another man. In his daughter's company he behaved as decorously as the most respectable father of a family could have done; not for the world would he have uttered before Bianca, we do not say one of his old oaths and curses, but not even a word louder than the other. He must make very sure that she was absent on some errand; he must actually go to the road, and see the flutter of her white dress far off, before he would hazard one of his former wicked winks at Orazio, meant to express — "What a monstrous fine girl, eh?" and add with a sigh, "What a pity you are a gentleman!"

"What do you mean?" asked astonished young Mancini.

"I mean that were you a rag-gatherer you might have her. Don't you understand? Why, it would make the old rogue *in partibus* burst with rage."

It was a fixed idea with the half-witted gentleman that his daughter must make a low marriage, in order to spite his brother. Little confidences of this kind had occurred more than once between the marquis and Orazio, and more than once had Orazio said to himself,

with a sigh, "What a pity it is that she is nobly born!"

To be born a noble was in Orazio's eyes an original sin, which nothing could wash away. This prejudice, imbibed in earliest childhood — a prejudice so intense as to amount to positive hatred — was common to most of the early Italian patriots and sympathizers with the French Revolution of 1789, of whom Orazio's father was one. Nor is it difficult to account for, and even to some extent to justify, this feeling of animosity towards the aristocracy. They had brought it upon themselves, less by abuse of power than by want of self-respect. The eighteenth century, especially towards its close, was no golden age of Arcadian innocence; rather the reverse. Nor for Italy alone: there much laxity of morals and licentiousness prevailed, the monopoly of no class, it is but fair to add; the evil ate more or less into the social body; yet it is not to be denied that scepticism and gross sensuality had chiefly originated, and blazed forth most conspicuously, in those upper classes, in whom the vulgar always seek a pattern, and whose example exerts a too decisive influence on the general standard of morality. Hence the fiery anathemas of Alfieri, and the witty sneers of Goldoni and Parini; hence their denunciation of the Patriciate to the indignation and contempt of all those who had yet some moral sense left. The inglorious fall of the last two governing aristocracies in the Peninsula, those of Genoa and Venice, which followed shortly afterwards, goes far indeed to give the measure of their decay, and of what remained of their hold and prestige upon the governed.

Things, it is true, had slowly but steadily mended

in this as in other respects, since that time. A healthier tone of morals had spread through all grades, many of the nobility had shaken off their sluggishness, and had awakened to high and noble aspirations and purposes. The very generation to which Orazio belonged had seen many of the Neapolitan and Piedmontese aristocracy join the national ranks in 1820 and 1821; had seen the representatives of the noblest Lombard families, for no other fault than that of loving their country, buried alive in that hell of man's invention, the Spielberg. A reaction in favour of the privileged classes had already taken place in the public mind; but such is the force of first impressions, and a deeply-rooted habit of thought, that even many of the witnesses of these changes for the better chose not to see them, and remained uninfluenced by them, hugging as fast and fondly as before their old rancour. Orazio was one of this number, and this explains why he said to himself with a sigh, "What a pity it is that she is nobly born!"

There was no lack, however, of extenuating circumstances in this case. Bianca had neither the pride, nor the self-conceit, nor the habits of self-indulgence — in one word, none of the sins — of the caste in which it had pleased Providence that she should be born. The name she bore, owing to her father's conduct, was no crown of glory for her. All her great relations and connections had silently renounced her. Her prospects were of the humblest, nay, of the saddest; she lived on alms, one might say; and if those alms were withdrawn, destitution stared her in the face. In the event of her father's death, the only hope left to her was, that her uncle the bishop, might find a husband for her.

And what sort of a husband God only knew. Portionless girls are generally at a discount. And Orazio's blood boiled at the thought of so much virtue and beauty thrown away upon some old titled libertine. These and similar considerations derived additional strength from two facts, the first no doubt, already anticipated by the reader, that Orazio was fathoms deep in love with Bianca; the second, that he had reason to believe — we word it as modestly as we can — that the young lady was not wholly indifferent to him.

Thus, one morning, when Bianca happened not to be at home, Orazio suddenly said to the marquis, "Do you know, neighbour, that I am no longer a gentleman?"

"No longer a gentleman!" repeated the surprised marquis.

"No," resumed Orazio, "I am about to turn rag-merchant; and I hope that, as such, you will accept me for your son-in-law."

"With all my heart," said the marquis, in high glee; "that is, if my daughter consents."

"Of course," replied Orazio, "your consent counts for nothing without that of your daughter."

"How the old rogue in violet stockings will fume and fret!" exclaimed the marquis, rubbing his hands. "Rag-merchant — the very thing — capital. What put such a notion into your head?"

"Why," returned Orazio, "I have decided at last to establish a paper-mill here. Paper is made of rags; I must therefore buy rags; so, you see, I am perforce a rag-merchant."

"Very good," said the marquis; "but what do you mean to do with your coal mines?"

"To leave them where they are; the working them would be too expensive for a man with so little capital as I have."

"And the alabaster quarry you discovered a short time ago?"

"It is too far off, and there is no road to the hills; but I have plenty of water at my door for my mill. So it will cost next to nothing."

Six months after this conversation, Bianca was married to Orazio, and installed in her new home — no other than the paper-mill, into which Orazio's house had been transformed. The marquis accompanied his daughter, and to him the best room was allotted. The marriage took place in the quietest manner possible; no fuss of any sort, no invitations, no *lettres de faire part* — at least, only one. At Bianca's suggestion, and unknown to her father, Orazio wrote a decent letter to Bishop Rodipani, to inform him of the marriage. Bishop Rodipani sent back in return four pages of choice invectives and maledictions against the good-for-nothing wretch who had taken advantage of an old man's imbecility, and a stupid girl's inexperience, to intrude himself, a plebeian, on the noble family of the Rodipani. Orazio handed this effusion, without a word, to Bianca, who read it, and, without a word, threw it into a pond close by, where a heap of rags were undergoing maceration. All this occurred in the early summer of 1829, and in the spring of 1830 Bianca presented her husband with a beautiful boy, named Paolo, after his grandfather the marquis.

By that time, the paper-mill was in full operation.

Uphill work it had been, for the manager knew little of the practical part of the business, and the workmen nothing at all, and were consequently in need both of teaching and training. But with a colleague like Bianca, what difficulties may not a man overcome, what weakness of head or hand not conquer! She possessed that sort of intuition, which not only discovers what is amiss, but also divines the remedy; she had that sort of self-reliance which commands the confidence of all around. Her quiet activity made itself felt everywhere; nothing was too low or too high for her. She found time and inclination, as well to see the rags weighed, to pay the hands their wages, to cast up the accounts, and yet to attend to the sublime duties of maternity, and to administer help and consolation wherever help and consolation were needed. Bianca had inherited the heroic soul of her blessed mother, the poor tradesman's daughter.

No wonder, then, that, as years went on, everything in the little household went on improving with them. The business became prosperous, the marquis fat and youthful-looking, the young Paolo tall, handsome, and clever — the lump of perfection, of course, which all children are in their parent's eyes. His father would say that a more decided turn for drawing than his Paolo evinced, he never had met with, and he resolved to fan the flame of genius accordingly. In truth, even less partial observers than a father and mother generally are, might have been struck with wonder at the precociously thoughtful countenance and earnest gaze of the four-year-old boy, as he sat poring over a book of pictures, or tried to copy one of the objects of his admiration. At this age it was that Paolo had his first

great sorrow, when he was told that never again would he see the one-week-old sister, who had already won his little heart, because she had gone away to be an angel in heaven. Happiness, you see, was not unalloyed at the paper-mill, and its inmates had their hours of trial. There came another cruel day two years after, when the marquis, struck by one of those thunderlike fits he had so often wished to his brother, was carried to his grave. Bianca bore the shock bravely. Affliction falls comparatively light on those united in love; it weighs terribly on those who are left to mourn alone.

In the spring of 1837, there broke out at Viterbo one of those attempts at insurrection, the periodical recurrence of which, ill-concocted and unsuccessful as they may be, is not less a proof of suffering next to unbearable in the social body from which they spring; because it is not to be believed that men of flesh and blood, if only tolerably at ease, will rush into the street, and cry down the powers that be, for the mere pleasure of receiving a musket-ball or a sabre cut, or, even worse still, of being sent to rot in a prison.

This movement at Viterbo, insignificant at it was, proved the foundation stone of Monsignor Antonelli's fortune, insomuch as it afforded the young and ambitious prelate, then delegate in that town, a golden opportunity of displaying for the first time, and attracting notice by, those talents for repression and compression, which have made him since so conspicuous a personage.

As ill-luck would have it, Orazio happened to be at Viterbo on business at the moment of the out-break. He left as soon as he could — the gates had been kept shut for twenty-four hours — and hastened to

Cascatelle. The news of the rising at Viterbo, magnified by distance and uncertainty, had preceded him, and he found the peaceful village in a state of fermentation. The young men of the place — for the most part, the hands employed at the papermill — were already arming themselves, as best they could, with the intention of proceeding to Viterbo.

Orazio arrived in time to check their ardour. He had to harangue them in the market-place, and not without difficulty did he succeed in bringing them to their sober senses, and restoring tranquillity. Within the same week, a party of gendarmes rode up to the paper-mill, handcuffed Orazio, and conveyed him to the prison of Montefiascone. Bianca, without hesitation, followed him thither; but orders were soon sent, in pursuance of which the prisoner was transferred to the Castle of Sant' Angelo, at Rome. Bianca returned to Cascatelle, to arrange the affairs of the mill; she omitted no precaution; left the minutest instructions and directions with the foreman, and then started for Rome, taking with her little Paolo. Orazio was now a State prisoner, accused of having harangued the populace in a public place, with intent to excite the inhabitants of Cascatelle to open rebellion.

A trial of a new kind was in store for Bianca at Rome. The poor lady was expecting an addition to her family; the fatigue of the hurried journey, and anxiety of mind, brought on a disappointing illness. The first fortnight of her stay in Rome she had to spend in bed; — fifteen days, fifteen ages at that moment. A letter to Bishop Rodipani, a letter written in the midst of agony of body and mind, received no answer. As soon as she could crawl, and in defiance

of the strict orders of her doctor, again and again did she seek admission to the bishop's presence; she knew no one else in the vast city: Monsignor was not at home; Monsignor was engaged; could not see her; would not see her. She was not to be rebuffed; it was for her husband's sake. For many successive days, passers-by noticed a lady, as white as death, standing by the gate, or sitting for hours on the doorsteps of the Rodipani palace. One day, at last, she caught sight of his reverence, as he was stepping into his carriage, and addressed him. He did not so much as turn his head her way, but ordered the coachman to go on. Bianca sprung to the head of the horses, and stood there motionless, looking him stedfastly in the face all the while: there was no defiance in her look, only an unconquerable determination. Monsignor, not moved, but awed by those two large eyes riveted on him — living eyes terrible to behold in that death-like countenance — monsignor condescended to listen to her — condescended to reply that, supposing he had been inclined, which he was not, he had no power in this matter concerning her husband. The carriage then proceeded on its way. Bianca fell on the pavement like one dead; no wonder, in her weak state. A compassionate tradesman close by lifted her up, and carried her into his shop. He and his family were very kind to her, asking how they could assist her: but when they heard her story, they shook their heads, and said, "Poor woman! had your husband committed murder, there would be hope for him still; but a political offender! —" Their looks clearly intimated that her case was hopeless.

Yet she must act, must exert herself as though it

were not hopeless. All her efforts to obtain the favour of an audience with his Holiness were baffled. Even Bianca's determination failed to carry her through the triple entrenchment, drawn by high and low functionaries, to guard the throne from intrusion. She petitioned — in vain. Letters and petitions fell short of their mark. She did force her way to some of the cardinals, and other influential personages; was rebuked by some, unheeded by most, pitied only by a few. Meanwhile, her bodily strength was fast failing. Her premature going out had entailed upon her fatal consequences, one of which was that she could scarcely walk. Trouble followed on the heels of trouble. Bad news came from the paper-mill; remittances were rare and scarce, poverty encompassed her. Still, the heroic spirit within upheld the frail and perishing body; so long as husband and son needed her, she could not, would not yield. What was to become of them, if she too deserted them?

So much constancy and self-sacrifice deserved a reward, and they found it. Bianca had been dragging her misery from door to door for eighteen months, when God, in His mercy, raised her up a protector and friend, in a priest according to the spirit of the Gospel — poor, humble, without interest, without connections, rich only in good-will and charity. He met her by chance in one of the antechambers of the powerful, where poor Bianca passed almost the whole of her time. He courted her confidence, listened to her tale, and comforted her by weeping with her. The holy man wrote down an abstract of her sad case, and handed it, accompanied by a strong recommendation from himself, to his single friend in high places, a prelate

and one of the judges of the Sacra Consulta. The tribunal of the Sacra Consulta has among its many attributions, that of the direction of the prisons. The judge, thus appealed to, instituted an inquiry into this prisoner's case, and the name of Orazio Mancini rang through the offices of this court. This species of notoriety was his salvation. Poor Orazio had been forgotten! Once recalled to mind, he was traced from prison to prison, and at last found. The charges against him were serious enough, but none proved; his name had not even once appeared in any of the depositions or examinations of the accused of Viterbo. A few months more, and Orazio was set free — unacquitted, but released on the ground of want of proofs!

A sadder joy was never seen: the meeting of husband and wife was like the meeting of two ghosts; they read in each other's looks that they met for a moment only, to separate for ever here below. Bianca felt an irresistible craving for rest; she faded faster every day, until her noble soul departed in peace. Her last words to Orazio were to ask forgiveness for deserting him; but it was the will of God. She bid him live for their Paolo.

Surely grief does not kill, or Orazio would not have survived her. Such is the misery of the flesh, that, heartbroken as he was, he lived — lived long enough to see his son one of the most promising pupils of the Academy of San Luca, win the Clementine prize, and be crowned at the Capitol; and also to see his little patrimony at Cascatelle pass into the hands of strangers. Such was the result of his eight years' struggle to retrieve his fallen fortunes. He died in 1817, one more of the thousand unknown victims of

that great incubus — despotism; leaving Paolo, a lad of seventeen, alone and all but penniless.

Paolo had been trained in too good a school to despond. He had nothing but his pencil and palette, and by them he determined to procure his daily bread. Plenty of his schoolfellows and friends as poor as himself, had no other income but what was thus gained. He would do like them. Life is easy to those who are contented with a crust and their independence. So he bought some scores of plain cards, and was in the act of writing on them, in his best hand, "Paolo Mancini, pupil of the Academy of San Luca, gives lessons in drawing, water-colours, and in oil-painting," when he was interrupted by an unknown visitor — a lean, yellow ecclesiastic, who announced himself as coming from Bishop Rodipani.

Paolo's blood tingled at the mention of that unwelcome name, and his first movement was to dismiss the messenger most unceremoniously; upon second thoughts, however, a kind of ironical curiosity seized upon him to hear what the new infamy might be which he scented in the air, and he listened.

The bishop's emissary went on to say, with great unction, that of all the virtues which adorned his reverence, the love of his kindred —"

"Pray," interrupted Paolo, "reserve your panegyric of monsignor until he is dead, and come at once to the point."

"The message of which I am the bearer," said the black robe, "is one of the utmost consequence to you. His reverence is full of the most cordial feelings, I ought to say paternal feelings, towards you; for no father can

be more anxious about his son's welfare than is monsignor about yours."

"Very kind of monsignor, to be sure," observed Paolo. "And what may be the price of all this goodwill?"

"Oh, the price, sir!" in a feigned tone of astonishment.

"Yes, the price; or, if you prefer it, what is the condition — for of course there is one — with which I am to buy monsignor's good graces?"

"His reverence naturally expects that in return you will comply with a request of his."

"And that is —?" asked Paolo.

"A very simple thing — a mere matter of form. Monsignor would wish you to assume your mother's name, and —"

"And?" urged Paolo.

"And drop that of your father."

"Never," said Paolo, rising. "Tell monsignor that I worship my mother's memory as that of a saint, and that if it were customary, I should be proud to bear her name. But tell him also that I hold my father's memory equally sacred, and that never, for any earthly consideration, will I part with the name he made so honourable."

"Surely," said the messenger, bewildered, "I have not been explicit enough, or you have not understood me?"

"How not?" said Paolo.

"Consider a little, sir; do not be too hasty. It is monsignor's fortune — his whole fortune — a large fortune, sir, which you sacrifice to a mere scruple."

"Scruple!" repeated Paolo, with a contemptuous

smile. "Well then, learn this, you a man in years, from one still a youth, that there are scruples, which, in some men's consciences, outweigh all the gold of California and Australia put together."

The gentleman in the cassock raised both his hands to his head, as if such a heresy was beyond the endurance of his ears, and took his departure. Our youth sat down again, and recommenced writing his cards. As soon as they were finished, he took some to the shops most patronized by foreigners, and gave the rest to his comrades and brother artists to distribute whenever an opportunity should offer. A series of advertisements in the columns of a paper styled *L'Artista*, also apprised the respectable public that Paolo Mancini, drawing-master, was at their orders. By these means the young man picked up some stray lessons, just sufficient to keep him from actual starvation.

CHAPTER IV.

Paolo's English Friend.

ABOUT this time there arrived at Rome an English gentleman of the name of Mortimer Thornton. He had come to Rome, as he would have gone anywhere else, merely for a change; just as one sick from fever turns and turns on his couch, *id est*, less from hope of being more at ease in his new posture, than from impatience at being uncomfortable in the old one. Mr. Thornton had wandered over half the world, without finding rest or relief anywhere. His evil was one of those mentioned by the poet, that get into the saddle with the rider.

Mr. Thornton was a discontented man. We beg

the reader's pardon for introducing to his notice a character so generally, and so justly unpopular; it being, in fact, more pleasant to look at the bright than at the gloomy side of life. But this variety, however rare, exists, and must have its reason for existing. Discontent is not so gay a feather in itself, that any of us would stick it in our caps for the mere pleasure of wearing it. Our estimate of most things depends much on accident and first impressions. A glorious sunshine, or a pouring rain, an obliging or ill-tempered landlord, will create in the mind a prejudice for or against the town visited for the first time — a prejudice which nothing afterwards can cancel. The same may be said of life. Enter it, for instance, a sickly, puny child, with no one to love or cherish you, and ten to one that your isolation, and the inferiority which delicate health entails on a weakly boy, among a set of boisterous, robust co-mates, will colour your view of life in yellow. Grow up to twenty amid the cares and worries of a law-suit, which, if unsuccessful, may leave you a beggar, and though you win at last, it is not very likely that, were you called on to depict humanity, you would do so in rosy hues. And if the unfaithful guardian, who would have despoiled you, chances to be a vessel of cant and humbug, much petted and made of, and testimonialized in certain circles, the odds are that you may contract a strong dislike to cant and humbug, and that those two powers will revenge your want of fealty by painting you as black as ink, as a radical, socialist, atheist, and what not: all which will not tend to sweeten your blood. Well, such was Thornton's story, to which, if you add a last chapter, disappointment in love, the reader will not wonder at meeting him at Rome,

as sad, as weary, as discontented as when he first set out on his travels, two years before.

Mortimer Thornton had much natural taste for the fine arts, and, though an indifferent painter himself, was a good judge and a *connoisseur* in painting and sculpture. In one of his lounges through the Vatican, he saw a youth copying, in reduced proportions, the Madonna di Foligno of Raphael. Thornton was struck by the fine intellectual physiognomy of the young painter, and still more so by his performance. He stopped and spoke some words of praise, which proved he was himself one of the craft. The youth said little in return, but that little revealed the true artist. Thornton, before he walked on, offered him his own card, and begged to know, if he might do so without indiscretion, the name of a student of such promise. Paolo, for it was he, gave the Englishman one of the cards, on which he had so carefully written "Paolo Mancini gives lessons," &c.

"You give lessons!" exclaimed Mortimer, surprised.

"Indeed I do," answered Paolo, with a frank smile; "that is, when I am lucky enough to get any."

The other immediately said, he should like to take some. Paolo wished for nothing better. Thus it was the two became acquainted.

Thornton took a great liking to Paolo. He believed him to have a rare talent; in every stroke of his pencil he beheld that individual character, which bears witness to the possession of original powers. Such correctness and chasteness of outline, such delicacy and energy of colouring! "Surely," Thornton would say, as, arm in arm, they visited different galleries, "surely you ought

not to waste your time in giving lessons. I protest you have the stuff in you of a great painter."

"Have I?" questioned Paolo, with a doubting shake of the head. "Perhaps I may have sometimes deluded myself with such vain thoughts; but what good will thinking about it do? *Non omnibus omnia*, you know. Never mind." Paolo had no ambition in him. As the master and pupil got better acquainted, the latter grew more communicative, and would let the man be seen as well as the artist, and each day Thornton took a livelier interest in both.

Paolo was really a fine young fellow, just of the sort to suit a man in Mortimer's mood. Full to overflowing of enthusiasm for his art, for his Rome, for all that was good and beautiful; a little inclined to melancholy, as are those Italian natures worth anything; intolerant of conventionalities as a savage, extreme in his loves as in his hates, open-hearted, devoted, independent; — such was Paolo Mancini at seventeen.

"I shall not leave Rome," thought Mortimer to himself, "until I have awakened this young man to a sense of his own powers, and put him in the way of making himself famous." And Mr. Thornton debated with himself what might be the best means of attaining this end without wounding his young friend's susceptibility. Mortimer was so in love, and pretended to be yet more so than he was, with Paolo's copy of the *Madonna di Foligno*, that he must have a copy for himself. Paolo undertook the commission willingly, but would hear of no payment. Mr. Thornton remonstrated with him on the subject. "If I take your time, and consequently prevent the possibility of your earning your daily bread by giving lessons, it is but just and

fair that I should compensate you; otherwise how are you to live?" The argument was stringent, and even Paolo felt it to be so. A price was, therefore, agreed upon between them, which, though trifling, was riches to Paolo, compared with the produce of his lessons. To work, then, immediately he went.

Paolo was not only without ambition, but he was also indolent; that is, he had fits of feverish activity, with long intervals of unconquerable sluggishness. Mortimer gently chided him for this, setting forth the advantage of moderate but steady work — *nulla dies sine linea*. Paolo winced at first, but tried to correct himself in deference to his friend, whose ascendancy over him increased with every day; and so far disciplined himself, as to give this good friend satisfaction.

Thus weeks and months passed, and Mortimer Thornton was still at Rome, and had no thought of departing. That restlessness, that yearning for change, which had been the bane of his life for these last two years, had left him. The stagnant waters of kindred sympathy were again stirring within him; his long-unemployed capital of benevolence had found a safe investment; he had somebody to care for now, and a good object to achieve.

In his daily intercourse with the young Roman, Mortimer naturally fell in now and then with one or other of a little knot of friends and fellow artists, who rallied round Paolo, and acknowledged him as their best gifted, and their leader; hearty good companions with the wildest theories about Art, poor as rats, uncomplaining, heedless of the morrow, and ever ready to pawn their cloaks — those who had them — to assist each other. These youths had realized, under the most

despotic of governments, a republic of their own, with community of all their earthly goods, and they lived, to every practical end and purpose, freer than many who, born free, put round their necks, of their own accord, conventional tethers and logs of many a sort. Their manners were not refined, it is true, but frank and truthful; their jests sometimes rather broad, but witty and original, their linen was somewhat doubtful — alas! with the greatest desire, it is not given to everybody to put on a clean shirt every day — but their hearts were clean, and that was some compensation.

With such fine children of nature, a man of Thornton's tone of mind was sure to have much fellow feeling. His lungs dilated in this primitive atmosphere, as do the lungs of one who passes from a boudoir hot with musk and patchouli, into the open air of a March morning, sharp but bracing. To some of these young people, who had most influence with Paolo, Thornton opened his mind, pointing out the mistake it was, that one with Paolo's powers should waste so much precious time in giving lessons; and he thus very soon secured willing accomplices in his kind plots against the youth in question. Among them, Paolo was persuaded to establish himself in a studio, and to devote himself entirely to the production of a historical picture, the subject of which his imagination had for some time been fluttering about, and caressing. The picture — Beatrice Cenci before her judges — was finished in time to be admitted to the new exhibition, just opened in Piazza del Popolo. It excited some notice, and was sold at a fair price to Giuditta Taddei, the highly respected and respectable retired singer, who employed

a portion of an honourably acquired fortune in encouraging young artists. Signora Giuditta recommended Paolo to another patron of art, Prince Torlonia, who asked the young man to furnish him with the design of a fresco, which was to adorn the ceiling of one of the halls of Palazzo Bracciano. Paolo not only gave the design for the ceiling, but, with a view to complete the subject, added a few episodes, intended for the walls. The sketch so pleased the prince, that he charged Paolo with the execution of it; but the political commotions of 1848, and the events of which Rome was the theatre in that and the ensuing year, necessarily adjourned its being carried into effect.

Now it was, and especially towards the latter part of the struggle, when a French army was besieging Rome, and "deeds, not words" was the order of the day, — now it was that Paolo and his little band of young patriots proved what fine fellows they were, and that Thornton's sympathy for them warmed into reverence and admiration. He saw them unhesitatingly exchange brushes and pencils for muskets and swords; he saw them unhesitatingly march wherever danger called them; he saw them unflinching, bandying jokes amid the rattle of musketry, and the roar of artillery, he saw them forced back from the outer walls, keep their post night and day at the barricades within the city, prepared, if so ordered, to defend the ground inch by inch. Thornton saw all this, because he was one of them. Hard work it was, and well done. When at last all was over, and they counted their numbers, out of their gallant band of twenty-three, nine were wounded, three would be absent for ever.

Paolo returned to his atelier, and then and there

conceived, and sketched *ab irato* the political composition at which we found him at work — Brennus at Rome. But scarcely had he chalked out his subject, when he was forced to leave it to fulfil his engagement to Prince Torlonia.

Thornton, on his side, acting upon the adage, "Stay where you are well," made up his mind to settle at Rome. Strong affections, the means of being useful, a love of Art, freedom from the scotches and fetters which mar the action of morbidly independent and retiring natures, — such were his inducements to this step. He took a floor in Via Babuino, near Paolo's studio, fitted up two of the rooms, to which there was a separate entrance for Paolo, and said, giving him the key, "From henceforth you are my tenant, I want somebody to help me to pay the rent of my lodging," and named a fabulously small amount of scudi as Paolo's yearly share of the expense. Paolo, whose Lares were all in his painting-room, had at first some scruples about transporting them to so aristocratic a mansion and neighbourhood, but ended by yielding the point gratefully and gracefully. And thus it was the Englishman and the Roman came to live together, much in the relationship of father and son, or, as the young scamps of their coterie would say, of Mentor and Telemachus.

Paolo's fresco in the Palace Bracciano, extolled to the sky by the many, pitilessly disparaged by the few — just the very medium for insuring success — won for him golden opinions. Two other large pictures, which followed in succession, added to his reputation, and at the time we met him in 1853, Paolo Mancini was acknowledged to be the most promising among the

rising painters of Rome, and was already in a fair way to fame and fortune.

In spite of his success, however, Paolo thought very modestly of himself — nay, was subject to fits of unreasonable discouragement, almost of despair, such as the one we have witnessed. This despondency especially overshadowed him immediately after he had put the finishing stroke to a picture. The execution, would he say, always fell so short of his conception; and more than once would he have thrown aside palette and brush, had it not been for Thornton, who cheered, chided, reasoned, raged, just as a father might do with a promising son, or Minerva with Telemachus; and, somehow or other, Paolo generally ended by allowing Mentor was always in the right.

CHAPTER V.

The Note.

DURING the time it has taken us to introduce Paolo and his English friend to the reader, the former's picture, or newly-finished group of figures, has been discussed, criticized, and, on the whole, pronounced the very best thing he has done by an Areopagus of half-a-dozen of his intimates, who drop in regularly every morning to his atelier. Paolo lends a willing ear to the strictures, but is naturally shy of praise; so he stops the conversation whenever it takes too eulogistic a turn, and says, "Now let us talk of something else. What's the news?"

"The general of the Franciscans has died of an indigestion."

"We are going to have a new saint."

"A great storm is brewing at the Vatican," burst out three voices at once.

"Ih! ih! one at a time, *uno alla volta, uno alla volta, per carità*," sang a little blond, who owed to his somewhat feminine features, and to his being both a landscape and portrait painter and a poet, the nickname of Salvator Rosa. "Who is to be the new saint, and what has he done?"

"What has he done? I like the question," said he, who had given the news. "Benedetto Labre is to be canonized for having done nothing. He has been all his life a professional beggar out of Christian humility."

"A curious encouragement to self-exertion," observed Thornton.

"And what is the cause of this new storm at the Vatican?" asked another.

"Piedmont," replied Malva (mallow), so yeleft from being a Piedmontese sympathizer, which was reckoned a great weakness — "infidel Piedmont, which threatens to suppress its convents."

"I wish it would suppress itself first," cried a flat-nosed sculptor, who, by reason of his nose and his profession, was never called otherwise than Buonarotti. "Piedmont is the bane of Italy."

"Fanaticism is the bane of common sense," retorted Malva. "In what manner, pray, is Piedmont the bane of Italy?"

"In the manner of a dam, which constrains great waters," replied Buonarotti. "But for Piedmont, and its sham liberties, Italy by this time would be a great and happy republic."

"Sham liberties!" replied Malva; "I like the notion vastly! A free press, sham! freedom of debate, sham! freedom of trade, freedom of conscience, Protestant temples, Jews members of Parliament, sham! If these are sham liberties, I should like to know what the real ones are. What do you say, Mentor?"

"I say that you are perfectly right," answered Thornton; "but, nevertheless, I call you and Buonarrotti to order. We have made it a rule that politics should be a forbidden theme here, and we mustn't infringe the regulation. Harmony and goodwill are only to be had at this price."

"A Daniel! a Daniel! — you are right!" was the unanimous exclamation.

"*Bravo ben, bravo ben, così si fa,*" hummed Salvator, who had taken off his black velvet coat, and was busy mending it.

"Was tailoring among the accomplishments of your namesake?" asked some one of Salvator.

"Indeed, I make no doubt it was," returned he. "At all times *povera e nuda andò Filosofia*. The age never knows its great men; witness Homer, Dante, Galileo, and company. When I am dead, I am sure I shall have a monument raised to me, but — *ma sarà tardi allor.*"

Paolo put down his brush, and watched Salvator's occupation with an affectionate and melancholy look, then exclaimed, "How now, Salvator? no wild landscape to depict for a lover of the picturesque? no features of some contemporary celebrity to hand down to posterity for the modest sum of ten scudi?"

"None just now," said Rosa. "I have cut the palette, and taken to the lyre. I am writing a libretto."

And he sang, "*Per comporre un dramma serio, quattro mesi ho consumati, trenta scudi ho guadagnati; dite voi come si fa?*"

"By the by, what is to be the new opera next carnival?" asked one who had not yet spoken.

"Two of Verdi's, *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata*," said Malva.

"Hang Verdi!" cried Buonarotti.

"Verdi for ever!" cried Salvator.

"Verdi is a humbug!" roared the former.

"Lictors," shouted the latter, standing up, and majestically waving the coat in his hand towards the door, "take hold of the blasphemer, and hurl him down the Tarpeian rock!"

"*Senatus populusque Romanus!*" yelled Buonarotti, getting upon a chair, and gesticulating theatrically: "I denounce this corrupter of public morals, this worshipper of false gods, to the Gemonies —"

"Verdi is a genius."

"Verdi is a fo—o—o—ol."

The door opened as the two were bellowing, and pointing towards it, and on the threshold appeared a young man in spectacles, who drew up the collar of his coat over his ears, covered his face with his hat, as if for protection, and otherwise made a comical show of being greatly afraid.

"Monsieur Dugentre! Monsieur Dugentre!" exclaimed several voices.

Dugentre was the *nom de guerre* of the new comer, a painter *de genre*, in fact, and of some merit; intolerant of anything but *genre*, worshipping *genre*, swearing by *genre*. Péliissier — such was his real name — had, till lately, been a pensioner of the French school

of painting at Rome. A realist in Art, a lover of paradox, a professed sceptic and epicurean, he was withal an excellent fellow at bottom, or he would not have remained on such friendly terms with these his Roman fellow-students and rivals, at a moment when his country and countrymen were rather at a discount with them.

"Are the barbarians at the gate of the Capitol?" asked he, advancing cautiously.

"Never mind where they are," said Paolo. "Welcome, Monsieur Dugenre; how fares the Real to-day?"

"Very well; many thanks. And the Ideal, is it flourishing, young Telemachus?"

"Briskly as ever," answered Paolo.

"Suppose you decide for yourself," interrupted Salvatore Rosa, pointing to Brennus and Co.

The Frenchman put his eye-glass over his spectacles, examined the picture long and earnestly, then said, —

"Beautiful, only *too* beautiful."

"How do you mean?" asked Paolo.

"I mean that it is too beautiful not to be unreal. Your figures are not to be found in nature, they are ideals. It positively makes my heart ache to see one who can design and colour as you do on the wrong track. We have outlived the Ideal."

"I would burn my brushes if I thought so," said Paolo, warmly.

"Do so at once, then," said Dugenre, "or use them to better purpose. You worship a fallen god. The Ideal has had its day, when men had faith and leisure: they have neither now-a-days; they have interests, that's all. The Real is the monarch of our age — the

age of steam, of electric telegraphs, and Californias. Out of realism, and its expression, the school of *genre*, there is no salvation for a painter. With your ideal you rub the hair of the present time the wrong way."

"I do, and pride myself in doing so, if the present time be such as you depict it," said Paolo. "Art is in its essence divine, and inventions and discoveries and photographs cannot alter its essence. If the alpha and the omega of Art were simply the reproduction of what you call the Real, why should God have put within us that incessant yearning after the Ideal, which makes our torment at once and our delight?"

"Enthusiast that you are!" cried Dugenre. "You satisfy yourself with words, and are set on fire by words. What is the Ideal, after all?"

"The Ideal is that divine halo with which the Creator has encircled the world of reality," answered Paolo. "So much the worse for those who do not see it."

"Bravo!" was shouted in chorus.

"A misty definition of a very misty thing," persisted the Frenchman. "It comes from Germany."

"Quite wrong; a countryman of your own wrote that," was Mancini's reply.

"Let who will say so, I confess I don't see this divine halo anywhere."

"The more is the pity," retorted Paolo, quickly. "Is the sun less dazzling for not being seen by the blind?"

"Come, come," said Dugenre, good-naturedly; "don't get angry, hot-headed Telemachus. I would rather renounce realism, and become a vaporous idealist, than give you offence."

"Nor do you, my dear friend," exclaimed Paolo, rising, and taking Dugenre by the hand; "it is my nature to speak hotly, but I am not angry in the least."

"Well, to prove it, you must come to-morrow and breakfast with me. I have a bit of *genre* of my own, and a case of claret, of both of which I want your opinion. May I rely on your giving me the light of your countenance, sage Mentor? Very well, come, every one of you, including Buonarotti's brother, whom I don't see."

"He is in the country," replied Buonarotti, "cooing like a dove, over head and ears in love."

"Is he?" said Paolo. "Then I congratulate and envy him. I wish I were in love myself; I am convinced that love makes a man."

"Or mars him," parenthesized Thornton.

"Neither the one nor the other, if one is wise," remarked Dugenre. "Women are neither the angels Mancini takes for granted they are, nor yet the devils Thornton declares them to be."

"For Heaven's sake," called out Thornton, "do not attribute to me such sheer nonsense. What I said, and what I maintain, is, that women are frivolous, and out of mere frivolity, without meaning it, may occasionally break a heart or two."

"Ungrateful that you are," was the Frenchman's repartee, "to find fault with the very instrument of your happiness: but for frivolity, that blessed key to their heart, how they would drive our poor, heavy, selfish, prosy selves!"

"Is a key worth while using which remains at the disposal of the first passer-by who may chose to get in

and turn you out?" asked Thornton, with a double dye of bitterness.

"What does it matter?" rejoined the realist. "It is one of the chances of war. If turned out here, I go elsewhere, that's all."

"Then love," said Paolo, "is with you but another name for pleasure."

"*Tu l'as dit*," cried Dugentre, with a laugh. "I consider this earth to be a garden, of which women are the animated flowers. Do we break our hearts if a rose is out of our reach, or if that we have picked withers in our button-hole? Not in the least; we pass to the next, or replace the withered with a fresh one. At all events, such is my philosophy."

"The philosophy of the harem," sneered Salvator.

"You are a pagan, Dugentre," burst forth Paolo, rising, and turning towards the Frenchman. "When you drag woman from her high pedestal, as the help-mate, the companion, the better half of man, to reduce her to the meagre proportions of a plaything, of a kind of *tableau vivant*, do you know what you do? You abolish at a stroke one of the noblest conquests of Christianity. By substituting pleasure for love, you suppress the soul, you deify matter, you dry up the living source of all that is noble, elevating, heroic in human nature; you make man —"

At this climax of his rhapsody, young Mancini was interrupted by a universal shout of homeric laughter, in which, a moment after, the excited orator himself joined most heartily. The cause of the general merriment was a stout negro, in an exaggerated suit of livery, who had suddenly appeared on the threshold of the room, and was now standing there, carrying a

note in his hand. His black features exhibited a ludicrous mixture of embarrassment and resentment.

A rolling fire of jokes followed the laughter.

"A messenger from the queen of Sheba."

"The Emperor Soulouque in person."

"An aggravated rainbow on a sky of ink."

"Is the Carnival begun, that monkeys go about in masquerade?"

"Oh! Albion, this is one of thy tricks."

"That is what it is," said Thornton, laughing; "we delight in such exhibitions, we take pride in them, we parade them. *Urbi et Orbi*, we grave British."

Meanwhile, Salvator strode up to the man in the rainbow, and looking him gravely in the face, without a question, took the note from his hand, and came back to Paolo, singing: *Sol due righe di biglietto; un biglietto? eccolo qua.*

"Thornton, do me the favour to see what it is," said Paolo, whose hands were encumbered. "As the sable caryatides does not move, I suppose there is an answer." Thornton broke the seal, and read aloud, for the note was in Italian. "Miss Lavinia Jones presents her compliments to Mr. Paolo Mancini, and being anxious to secure some lessons from so excellent a master, begs to know what days and hours would best suit his convenience. The favour of an answer by the bearer is requested. Palazzo Morlacchi, Via del Corso."

"*C'est un peu fort*," laughed Dugentre.

"An antediluvian notion," said Salvator.

"Miss Lavinia has dropped from the moon," remarked Malva.

"How many mis-spellings?" asked Buonarotti.

"Not one, I believe," replied Thornton. "The note is correctly, and I must say, beautifully written."

"Let me see," said Paolo. "Oh, charming — what a terse, elegant handwriting! a beautiful creature she must be, that possesses such a hand — perhaps my Ideal."

"Paolo, you must send an answer," said Thornton.

"I haven't got a sheet of decent writing-paper."

"Never mind, here write in pencil on the blank page of the lady's own note," said Mortimer, tearing it off as he spoke.

"That will do," said Paolo; and placing it on an easel, he wrote, — "Mr. Paolo Mancini presents his compliments to Miss Lavinia Jones, and begs to inform her, that having ceased to give lessons for the last six years, he must decline the —"

"Must respectfully decline," corrected the Englishman.

"Must respectfully decline the honour," wound up Paolo, "of teaching her. I am sorry to say I have neither envelopes nor sealing-wax, not even a wafer."

"Fold it up three corner-wise," advised Thornton, "and address it. You have kept the man waiting too long."

The note being at last folded, not without trouble, and addressed, Salvator once more went up to the messenger, put it into his hand with the same gravity and taciturnity with which he had divested him of Miss Lavinia's, and then pointed with his finger down the stair.

Paolo being warned by his stomach that it was past his time for breakfast, laid aside his working blouse, repaired behind a screen to wash his hands and face, put on his gray wide-awake, and they all adjourned to a neighbouring *café*.

CHAPTER VI.

The Visit.

AFTER breakfast, according to his wont, Mancini returned to his atelier. During the hour or so he had been absent, his picture had haunted him incessantly; he had seen with his mind's eye many improvements and additions, which he was impatient to seize and fix on his canvas. True genius is always thus in constant ebullition, never at rest. Creation in Art is a feverish process, without solution of continuity, — a ceaseless hand-to-hand struggle of the spirit against rebellious matter, wherein the victory is at the cost of throes of heart, soul, and brain. The beautiful, like the oracles of old, gives neither response nor insight into its arcana, save to the Pythoness writhing in a sacred frenzy on the divine tripod.

The afternoon was Paolo's time of privacy. By a tacit agreement between him and his friends, his studio was tabooed, except on pressing business, from one till five o'clock. Mortimer alone was an exception to this rule. It was then that Paolo, secured against interruption, gave free scope to his fancy; it was then he would sketch his subjects, design groups, erase, begin anew, just as the tide of inspiration prompted. For the nonce, he was giving some finishing touches to his Brennus, and the other foreground figures. A rap at the door of the studio. —

"Come in," cried Paolo, taking it for granted that it must be Thornton. The clink of spurs on the floor — Thornton both rode and wore spurs — confirmed him in his belief.

"Well, Mortimer?" he exclaimed, painting on.

"But it is not Mortimer," cried a merry and sweet young voice close by his side.

As if he had received an electric shock, the artist started up, let fall his palette, and, turning round, found himself confronting a tall young lady in a riding-habit, and a middle-sized elderly gentleman in black. Poor shy Paolo stood transfixed, without a word to say, without even sufficient presence of mind to offer seats. All he did was to colour prodigiously, and feel the drops of perspiration rise on his brow.

"Excuse our intrusion," began the lady in Italian; but as her eyes fell on the group, at which Paolo had been at work, she stopped, clapped her hands, and burst out enthusiastically: "Oh, how beautiful! — this is exquisite! — look, uncle, look!"

The uncle looked through his eye-glass, and echoed, —

"Beautiful; yes, indeed; very beautiful!"

"Isn't it? it is a gem, a masterpiece. What lovely colouring! I don't pretend to be a judge, but it seems to me quite like a Domenichino."

"Oh! madam," protested Paolo, who, owing to this diversion, had had time to recover from his stupor.

"Indeed, I mean what I say," persisted the lady; "I am sure there is the same breadth, the same grand style —"

"Pray don't make me blush, — you compare a pigmy to a giant," said Paolo, offering a chair to each of his visitors.

"Oh! thank you," said the lady, declining the chair; "we are not going to stay, we must not rob you of time that you employ so well."

"May I at least have the honour of knowing —?"

"Who we are? Why, do you not guess? — how curious!" and her merry laugh showed Paolo a double range of pearly teeth; "do you not guess that it is Mr. Jones and his niece, Miss Lavinia Jones?"

"Indeed! the writer of the note I received this morning!" exclaimed Paolo, his face once more in a blaze. "I really did not take you for English, but for a countrywoman of my own. You speak Italian so well."

"Now, that is downright flattery; you know how to pay compliments."

"I do not," said Paolo; "I never flatter, never pay compliments."

"Not the very least little bit?" she persisted, in a pretty, coaxing voice.

"Never; not the least little bit," said Paolo, gravely repeating Miss Lavinia's own words.

"Then you are not like other men."

"How not so? — at least, I am like most of those I know."

Her eyes dived into his with a fixed look of curiously mingled surprise and incredulity. Perhaps so much simplicity in a man of Paolo's size struck her as not being natural; or, perhaps, she wondered what sort of primitive society he had fallen into. Paolo, who by this time had recovered his self-possession, stood her searching gaze bravely, nay, returned the fire.

"So you did not guess who we were?" resumed the girl, after a pause; "and, as for the reason of our visit, I daresay you guess that as little —"

Paolo guessed it, but he did not choose to say he did. The prospect of being obliged to refuse anything

to so charming a suitor was too disagreeable not to be avoided as long as possible.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I came to urge in person my written and refused petition of this morning. Now, pray, do not answer me yet, or I shall lose all the little stock of courage left me. The sight of that beautiful picture has already taken it almost all away. I feel how ridiculous it is to ask the person who can do such wonders, to stoop to give a girl like me lessons."

"Oh, it is not that —" began Paolo.

"Not yet, not yet," interrupted Miss Lavinia, with a wave of her hand, and a bend of the neck sideways, that might have put a swan to the blush. "I want first to explain and apologize. I assure you, I had not the smallest idea, when I wrote, that you were such a great painter. Your address was given to me before we left London, by a friend of mine, Lady Augusta Barr — perhaps you may remember her — you gave her lessons in 1848. It was only this morning, after receiving your note, that I found out, by inquiring at the English shop of engravings in the Corso, that Signor Paolo Mancini was the name of a celebrated artist."

"Indeed, Madam!"

"Yes, of a celebrated artist. This is my explanation — now for my apology. You will think, knowing what she knows, why did she not desist from plaguing me? I am but a woman, and women are always allured by difficulties. It took me nearly a fortnight to hunt out your address; not one of those stupid ciceroni, who pretend to know everything, could find you out. I suppose they never fancied, that the drawing master I sent them in search of, could be one and the

same as their great painter. Now, that I have found you at last, it would be very hard — wouldn't it? — to lose you directly. We hold to what has cost us trouble, — and then I am a silly, wilful thing, and you must forgive me."

There was an irresistible fascination in Lavinia's look, in her gestures, in the varying undulations of her rich soft voice, in the graceful harmony of all her being as she spoke. Our solitary young painter had never sat at such a feast. The spell, so new to him, acting on his brain, produced a gentle intoxication: who knows how long he might have remained silent, had not the young lady added with a quiet smile, and sitting down at last, — "Now, you may speak."

It was not an easy thing, considering what he had to say. He summoned all his courage, and stammered out, —

"It is I who ought to apologize. I wish you could know what it costs me to refuse — but really as to giving lessons, it is quite impossible."

The young lady frowned and bit her lips.

"Do not be afraid that I shall take up too much of your time. I will be the most discreet of pupils, grateful even for a short half-hour."

"It is not the time I grudge. Though busy enough," said Mancini, "I could afford an hour or so. But, — hear how I am situated: since I left off giving lessons, I have had plenty of applications, it seemed as if done on purpose. For, when, God knows, I wanted pupils badly enough, very few were to be had; but the moment I declined any, they flocked to me. Well, as I said, I have had plenty of applications, many of them backed by strong recommendations from friends of mine,

and to avoid offending some, I gave up all. Now you see that I could not make an exception in your favour, without behaving ill to others, and that I am sure you could not desire."

"Quite right, we will not have you do anything wrong," said Miss Lavinia; "I withdraw my original petition, and present another. Come and give me advice and direction now and then, will you?"

There was distilled into that "will you?" the very quintessence of all womanly grace and witchery. Paolo was very nearly conquered, but his conscience protested:

"You change the word," said he, smiling; "but you retain the substance."

"I will make my request still more modest," persevered Miss Jones. "Only allow me to show you my poor attempts — the nicest delicacy could not be hurt by your coming to our house."

These words "our house" evoked in Paolo's mind a whole phantasmagoria of powdered footmen, of fathers in white cravats, showy mothers in flounces, such as he had seen and suffered from, when giving lessons to Lady Augusta, and his courage revived.

"My habits are so retired —" he began.

Miss Lavinia did not allow him to go on.

"We are very quiet people," she said, "and surely you are not going to refuse a lady when she merely invites you to come and see her as a friend."

It was the *coup-de-grace*.

"Such a title offers too strong a temptation to be withstood," said Paolo, "I am at your disposal."

"That is really kind of you," exclaimed the girl,

colouring with pleasure. "Uncle, uncle — Signor Mancini consents to call and look over my daubs."

This was said in English, and with great animation. Uncle, who during this long dialogue had been taking an inventory of all the moveables in the studio, did not seem electrified by the intelligence, but contented himself with replying, —

"Does he? I am glad to hear it; he is very polite, I am sure. Now, shall we go?"

"When will you come?" asked Lavinia of Paolo; "will it be to-morrow at two o'clock?"

"To-morrow I am engaged."

"Then the day after?"

"With pleasure."

"Thank you, thank you," reiterated the young lady, cordially holding out her hand. Paolo shook it with English fervour.

"You have been wasting time and words," said Mr. Jones, to his niece, when they got downstairs.

"How to you mean *wasting*?" asked his niece. "I have secured a great artist as my drawing-master, and is that worth nothing?"

"You might have accomplished your purpose more easily and quickly, had you begun by the right end," said uncle.

"And pray what was the right end?"

"To have said simply and plainly, 'Name your own terms, sir; money is of no consideration to us.'"

"Oh! fie, uncle. You believe that money can do everything, and there's your mistake. You give me credit for some penetration, don't you? Then take my word for it, gold is not the lure that will catch this Signor Paolo."

"Pooh! pooh! pooh!" was the uncle's rejoinder, as he put her on her horse, "nonsense and romance, men are all alike."

Mr. Mark Jones was a matter-of-fact man, on whom romance had certainly no hold, however nonsense may have had. He believed in gold, worshipped gold, revered the possessors of gold; himself above all, Jones, the great gatherer of gold. Mr. Jones was the author of his own fortunes; his *début* in life having been of the humblest. As a lad of sixteen he had left his native village, and gone to London with but five shillings in his pocket. By dint of hard work, sharpness, self-denial, and no over-scrupulousness, young Jones managed, in the course of a dozen years, to swell his five shillings into a couple of thousand pounds. It was not a fortune, to be sure, but enough to form the foundation of one; the young man was ambitious. He was still looking about for a good start, when chance, or his lucky star, brought him, in the course of business, in contact with Mrs. Jarman, a buxom, good-natured, newly-made widow, the owner and manager of a fashionable Italian warehouse in one of the most fashionable quarters of the metropolis. Even now, at eight-and-forty, and in spite of a rather excessive development of the jaws, Mr. Jones was still a handsome man in his way. At eight-and-twenty he was superb; jetty hair, and whiskers to match, bright eyes, complexion ruddy and clear, and a leg! his leg was a matter of notoriety wherever he went. Mrs. Jarman was not insensible to all these perfections. Mr. Jones was not blind, and, in short, at the end of her mourning, Mrs. Jarman bestowed on him the golden key of her heart and strong box, and the name of Jones

figured in letters of gold by the side of that of Jarman.

The aspiring bridegroom infused new life into his bride's business. By an adroit system of bribes to the cooks of clubs and aristocratic families, he doubled the custom of the house in no time. Sauces, pickles, and truffles, were not sent out faster than silver and gold flowed in. A few years more and Mr. Jones saw himself the possessor of a large capital, and at once he extended his sphere of action. The moment could not have been more propitious for an ambitious speculator. It was in 1845—6—that period when the whole nation was turned into gamblers—Mr. Jones launched out with the boldest, into railroad speculations, and realized immense profits; that is, he gambled and won. As he grew rich, so he grew ostentatious: the Italian warehouse, with Jarman and Jones, in letters of gold, became an eyesore to him, and he disposed of it very advantageously. The sum of money thus obtained was soon doubled and trebled. Whatever he undertook, let it be ever so rash, was sure to prosper. There are men whom fortune literally pelts with her favours, and Mr. Jones was one of them.

The world, which believes in nothing but success, applauds those who rise, and hisses those who fall, little knowing, or, indeed, caring to know, how often the capricious goddess lavishes her smiles on mediocrity, idleness, or worse, while she frowns on honest toil and industry, and even takes pleasure in frustrating the most energetic and well-directed efforts. Mr. Jones was an instance in point; the more he succeeded, the more he was pronounced worthy of succeeding. His enterprise, his activity, his skilful combinations, found

hosts of admirers and panegyrists. A few years more, and behold Mr. Jones chairman of a railway, founder and chief shareholder of a bank, a man enormously rich, a man whose name was of importance on 'Change.

Successful as he was, Mr. Jones had his private vexations. The first was that he had no children, nor hope of any, considering the age of his wife, full ten years older than himself. He had endeavoured to supply this want, by in a manner adopting his niece Lavinia. He had given her the best education that money could procure — he had come to love her as much as was in his nature to love — he was very proud of her, and it was generally supposed she would inherit his hundreds of thousands. Still Lavinia was, after all, only a *pis-aller*; and a son and heir of his own continued to be the unattainable object of Mr. Jones' sighs. Two other crumpled leaves in his bed of roses, were the humility of his beginnings in life, and his name. He was ashamed of both, and would fain have erased them, if he could, not only from the memory of others, but his own. His name especially was a perpetual blister to him. He fancied that ridicule attached itself to the innocent monosyllable — he would far rather have been called Nebuchadnezzar, than Jones. He loathed it, could not bear the sound of it, could not see it in print without a shudder. *The Times* and *Punch* were his everlasting bugbears. Did not they clothe their impersonations of all that was stupid and laughable in mankind, with the name of Jones? Could he have had his way, the managers of those papers would have fared but ill.

Since we are on the chapter of Mr. Jones' foibles, let us have our laugh out. Mr. Jones had met at the *table-d'hôte* of Hartmann's Hotel at Florence, where he and his family were for the time being located, a young Italian, announcing himself as a Roman. This gentleman being able, as he modestly expressed it, "to murder English a little," a sort of intimacy sprang up between him and Mr. Jones, whose own talents as a linguist were of the smallest. Cavaliere Martucci — such was the title and name of this Italian — had, however, something more magnetic for Mr. Jones than even the knowledge of Mr. Jones's native tongue. The magnet was the small gold cross which Cavaliere Martucci wore at his button-hole, and which he explained to be the insignia of the Roman order of St. Sylvester, a commandership of which conferred the title of Count Palatine.

"Difficult to obtain?" asked Mr. Jones, one day.

"Not so," was the answer; "any one of a good family might obtain it, that is, backed by interest of the right kind."

This information was not lost upon one who would willingly have given an eye for a title.

"And," pursued Mr. Jones, "could a Protestant belong to this order of St. Sylvester?"

"Certainly," answered the Cavaliere; "it was a most enlightened, tolerant order. Did his English friend contemplate an application in that direction?"

The English friend laughed one of his loudest laughs, as he said, —

"Why not? were it only for the fun of a Protestant wearing the Pope's colours."

Of this argument, the Cavaliere only seemed to comprehend that it was an affirmative, for he gravely rejoined, —

“That he should be too happy to gratify his excellent friend’s desire, and should certainly succeed by introducing Mr. Jones to a friend, a personage who could and would do anything for him (the Cavaliere). Perhaps Mr. Jones might already know, at least he must have heard of the family of Fortiguerra, one of the most ancient families of Italy. His friend was Count Mendez Fortiguerra, a nobleman most influential at the Court of his Holiness. Count Mendez,” continued the Cavaliere, “being now actually at his estates at Albano, Mr. Jones’s introduction to him must necessarily be delayed, until they should all meet at Rome, where he believed he was right in supposing Mr. Jones and his amiable ladies were to spend the winter.”

Nothing more was said between Mr. Jones and the Cavaliere on this point, but both felt there was a tacit agreement between them.

“How wide those chaps on ’Change will open their eyes,” thought the former, “if one of these days I appear among them a Count Palatine!”

CHAPTER VII.

The Eternal Pro and Con.

MISS LAVINIA'S visit had left Paolo in that state of bodily and mental titillation, which follows a pleasurable shock. He sat himself down on the chair she had occupied, shut his eyes like one who, dazzled by the sun, continues to see its reflection on the retina, and then, little by little, he fell into a reverie.

Thornton found him in the same position an hour after.

"Lazy?" said Thornton.

"Do you call a man lazy who does not work manually? If so, I think that Columbus and Newton must have been very lazy fellows. I am making a poem."

"And the hero is?"

"My hero is a heroine — Miss Lavinia Jones."

"What riddle is this?" asked Thornton.

"A riddle to you, profane, whose obtuse senses do not perceive the ambrosial fragrance she has left behind her. The queen, the fairy, the goddess, whom mortals call Lavinia, has been here, hallowing the very chair I am sitting on."

"Miss Jones has been here!" exclaimed Thornton.
"And what for?"

"For what do queens visit their subjects?" rejoined Paolo. "To order and be obeyed. For what do goddesses reveal themselves to mortals? Why, to be worshipped. She is both queen and deity, my dear friend. Nature gave her a crown of beauty; her gait reveals the goddess — *incessu patuit dea.*"

"If you would drop all these hyperboles, and condescend to make yourself intelligible —" remarked the Englishman.

"You tax me with hyperbole, as a blind man might one who sees, for descanting on the glories of the sun. Had you seen her, had you heard the music of her voice, had you felt the electric shock the touch of her hand gave, you would understand me, and share my worship."

"Faugh!" said Thornton. "Glory is the only woman worth courting and worshipping."

"Say rather that glory is only worth courting and worshipping — only likely to be attained for the sake of a woman. If you search deeply, my dear friend, you will discover that in all great achievements woman has been the inspiration."

Thornton answered gravely:

"If you were to put in the one scale all the achieved greatness inspired by woman, and in the other all the greatness prevented or nipped in the bud by her, you would see to which side the balance inclined. Let us speak seriously. Paolo, do you mean to pretend that you are in love with this Miss Lavinia Jones?"

"As much as may be at first sight," said Paolo, smiling. "If it is a rose, it will bloom with time, as the saying is with us Italians. I wish you would not look so alarmed."

"I wish you would not take love for a plaything; it is like playing with poison."

"Ih! ih!" cried Paolo, laughing.

"Yes," continued Thornton, "I would rather see you with a fit of ague than in love. Ague at the worst might kill your body, while love —"

"While love?" interrogated Mancini.

"While love leaves your soul a cripple for life," wound up Thornton. "But you have not answered my question. What was the lady's object in coming here after your note of refusal?"

Paolo related to his friend all the particulars of the conversation he had had with Miss Lavinia, and the promise she had in some sort wrenched from him. Thornton looked mightily displeased at this upshot. Waste of precious time, neglect of his profession, the ill-will of those to whom Paolo had declined to give lessons, these were the inevitable consequences, setting aside the possibility of more bitter ones, which, according to Thornton, were to be the result of Paolo's acquiescence.

"Upon my honour," observed the young man, sedately, "I do not deserve to be scolded. Short of being unmannerly, nay, downright rude, I could not decline a request couched in such flattering terms. I could not have done so had Miss Lavinia been as plain as she was handsome."

"If that's the case, if you had no alternative, then the conclusion I come to is, that Miss Lavinia outstepped the limits of propriety."

"Pray," entreated Paolo, "do not judge her so harshly; she does not deserve it. For nearly a fortnight she has been searching all Rome for me, you see; she had set her heart on having her friend's drawing-master as hers also. All she said was kindly meant; and were I still a poor teacher, how thankful I should be! The alteration in my circumstances is no reason why I should not feel kindness."

Thornton did not answer. After musing awhile, he said:

"You are a good fellow, Paolo, much better than I am. Did I not know how extreme you are —"

"Like an Englishman," murmured Paolo, slyly.

"Yes, minus the organ of caution. Well, did I not know how extreme you are, I would not fret and plague you as I do."

"Come, come," said Paolo, with a look at Thornton full of affection, "don't be uneasy on my account. I am twenty-four, and neither a child to be dazzled by a brilliant meteor, nor yet a lucifer match to blaze up at the sight of every pretty woman I meet. Besides, you ought to set down something to the enthusiasm of an artist, brought face to face with an exquisite type of beauty. You will admire her as much as I do when you see her. Soft blue eyes, and raven black hair — a pearly complexion, with those tender blue shades about the temples and throat so dear to painters — the brow of a Juno, large eyelids with long lashes — such combination of majesty and grace is a godsend to a devotee of the beautiful. What would I not give to be allowed to take her picture! I am sure I could make a *chef d'œuvre* of it, I am sure I could."

"Stick to your Brennus, and leave portraits alone, that's my advice to you," said Thornton. "Courting danger is the trade of a fool. Oh! that I could give you a little of my experience!"

"A sad present that would be," remarked the Roman. "As far as I see, experience is but another word for mistrust of our fellow-creatures."

"Too true," said Thornton, with a sigh; "but what if safety is only at that cost?"

"Is love, then, a pit of perdition?"

"To such as you it is certain disappointment," pronounced Thornton. "The same *beau idéal* you seek in art, you will seek in woman, and not find it. The all-absorbing exclusive love you dream of, is not a flower of this earth. The moment you believe yourself enthroned in a woman's heart, the moment you imagine yourself all the world to her, as she is to you — there comes between you the fluttering of a brilliant butterfly, the music of a polka, or a glance from some demigod with a star on his breast, anything, in short, that happens to excite her fancy or tickle her vanity; and you are thrown into the shade from which, when you emerge into light again, not the less welcome for having been abolished for awhile, you learn that far from being her life, you are merely an accident in her life, and that your empire is shared by her poodle and her milliner."

"That there are such women as you describe, I have no more doubt, than that they are the exception and not the rule."

"In that you are mistaken — those you call the exception, are, on the contrary the rule, from which I don't deny there may be some few rare exceptions. Novelty and glitter are irresistible attractions to the fair sex. Noise and flutter are such accomplishments as they cannot withstand, says Addison, not I. It is a matter of organization. There is a predominant element in them, call it mobility, plasticity, impressibility, excitability, what you like; for my part, I call it frivolity — which is utterly incompatible with anything deep-rooted and settled."

"Are we men so exempt from frivolity or inconstancy, as to feel ourselves entitled to throw stones into

our neighbour's garden on either score?" asked Paolo. "I know in what women do far outstrip us — I know one excellence at least, in which women leave us far behind — I mean in that heroism, which recoils from no toil, no sacrifice, to relieve those who suffer — the heroism you so much admired in our women tending the sick and wounded in 1849."

"Granted," said Thornton; "unhappily, the world, as it is, affords but small scope for the exercise of the chivalrous, compared with the unlimited one it offers to that of the frivolous element; the result being, that women enlist their chivalry into the service of their frivolity. Their life is a perpetual sacrifice to a most exacting goddess — Fashion. For her they freeze in winter, and burn in summer; for her they carry a bulk of clothes that a porter would decline, and pinch and martyrize themselves at all seasons."

"There is truth in what you allege," quoth Paolo; "but whose is the fault? The fault is ours. If, instead of crying, 'Bravo!' and clapping our hands at such unnatural exhibitions, we hissed and turned from them in disgust, do you not think there would soon be an end of them?"

"Probably," said Thornton; "and the moral is that there is not a pin to choose between the one sex and the other."

Upon which consoling conclusion, our two friends separated.

CHAPTER VIII.

Miss Lavinia's Diary.

"Rome, Piazza di Spagna,
Hôtel de la Ville de Londres.

"MY DEAR LADY AUGUSTA,

"I HOPE my hurried scrawl from Leghorn has reached you. It was to announce our sudden flight from Florence. I cannot call it by any other name. It had been settled, you know, that we were not to go to Rome before the end of October. Very well! we lived in that belief up to last Monday, but we had reckoned without Lord Berriton. 'Lord Berriton?' you repeat: 'a tall fat man, with an odious brogue! What could he have to do with your plans?'

"That is just what I am going to explain: On Monday evening we were eating ices at the Cascine, when a voice exclaimed, 'Old Jones of Piccadilly, I declare!' and up came the speaker to Mr. Jones — I shall never call him uncle again. I never saw un—, Mr. Jones, I mean, so taken aback, then so obsequious; he could not stand upright before this old acquaintance of his. A truant boy could not have looked more crestfallen in the presence of his schoolmaster. The nobleman, with his impertinent, patronizing airs, was to the full as meanly odious as Mr. Jones; but he did not belong to me, so I did not care. His lordship seemed inclined to commence a conversation with me, but I did not choose it, under the rude stares the two ladies with him, horribly vulgar they looked, were giving both aunt and me — just as if we were two strange, newly-imported animals. 'Ah, well, Jones,'

bawled my lord, 'I have taken apartments here in Florence for six months. I hope to see you again,' with a glance at me. Mr. Jones, to my surprise, answered that his lordship was very good, but that we were going on to Rome directly.

"During the whole of our drive back to Florence, Mr. Jones never opened his lips, but when we reached the hotel, he said curtly, 'Have your trunks packed at once, ladies, we are off in the morning for Rome.' I thought at first it was a bad joke. I needn't tell you that I protested energetically. I said it was downright madness to brave the Campagna under a scorching August sun. Strong healthy people scarcely would attempt such a journey, it would be the death of aunt. It was like talking to a lamp-post. 'If you choose to stay you are welcome to do so; I am off to-morrow morning for Leghorn,' and with this ultimatum he went to his own room. I was for staying, but aunt, as usual, was for yielding. So to Leghorn we went, got on board the Sully steamer, and by break of the next day landed at Civita Vecchia. Thank God, we had plenty of rain on the road to Rome; and here we are. Now, what do you think of tyranny like this?

* * * * *

"A melancholy but a wonderful city — well named the Eternal. It looks as if built by giants to last an eternity. How little one feels oneself amid this antique grandeur! It gives me a feeling something like that I had when I saw the Jungfrau for the first time. I have spent these two last days tearing through Rome, sometimes with aunt, oftener with Grace, my maid. I won't have anything to do with Mr. Jones — lucky for him that aunt is pretty well. To-morrow we are to go and

see an apartment in the Corso, approved by Mr. Jones, not the more likely to please me; it must be something wonderful indeed, if I don't find fault with it. My dear, the swarm of monks and priests is incredible; I saw a beautiful Capuchin this morning. I mean to make a picture of him from memory. I have sent a *valet de place* to Via dei Macelli in quest of your old drawing-master, whom I mean to give me lessons.

* * * * *

"Really, the apartment is unobjectionable, so it is taken for three months. We are to remove there to-morrow. It is beautifully situated in the Corso, plenty of light and air and space. Old-fashioned heavy furniture which I rather like. Via dei Macelli does not know Signor Mancini any more. The *valet de place* promises to unearth him though, if he be still of this world. Yesterday and to-day a good round of sight-seeing. Grand, grand, grand — to-morrow is to be a shopping day, piano and harp to hire, brushes and colours and canvas to buy, a circulating library to search out, — the evenings are dull enough.

* * * * *

"Corso, Palazzo Morlacchi.

"My diary bids fair to be of a happy, neutral tint. *Les jours se suivent et . . . se ressemblent.* No: not the days, but the evenings. Sight-seeing agreeably enough occupies the one, for my enthusiasm for this wonderful city continues unabated — it withstands even the professional twang of the eicerones; but the evenings, my dear Augusta, the evenings are eternities — heavy, heavy, heavy. You will understand the how and the wherefore when I add — and we spend them almost

all *en famille*. Rome swarms with people of all nations, with English of course, but we have made no acquaintances with any of them, and to the few Roman families who see company, we have no introductions. The only one of the aborigines with whom I have had the power of exchanging a word besides the horrid cicerones, is the old gentleman, from whom we have hired the first floor of this palace — at an enormous price, so uncle says. Our banker Prince Torlonia — how odd that a banker should be a prince, and a prince go on with banking — is just now in mourning, and sees nobody. Uncle is expecting Chevalier Martucci, that man we got acquainted with in Florence — I told you about him in one of my last letters. He is to introduce us to a Roman count, who is to be our godfather, and answer for us in the best set in Rome. *En attendant*, we spend the evenings at home, aunt yawning over her crochet, uncle worshipping *The Times* and his brandy-and-water; and I — going from the piano to the harp, like *une âme en peine*. This life of unnatural seclusion irritates my nerves, and spoils my beauty. I am not joking; it really does, I feel I am getting old, ugly, and disagreeable. How can a woman go on looking handsome, if there is no one to admire her? For a wonder, last evening we went to a concert at the Metastasio. I rather enjoyed the music, but the hall itself is unbearable, so stupidly arranged, so ill-lighted. Fancy being shut up in a dark box, where nobody can see you! What a difference from her Majesty's in London, or from the Italian Opera in Paris! It is worth dressing well and looking well to go to those parterres of living flowers. By-the-by, I cannot find your drawing-master, he has left his old lodging,

and is gone no one knows where. It is very provoking, for even if I did not do much in the painting line, it would have been one way of practising my Italian. Everything goes wrong with me just now. I have promised a fabulous reward to the *valets de place* if they unearth Signor Mancini for me: I hate to be beat in anything. However, it is ten, and I am going to bed. Isn't it ridiculous? I shall not send this scrawl for a day or two, in the hope of something coming to pass, that will let me end with a flourish.

* * * * *

"Caught him, and carried him by storm! I may say with Cæsar — *veni, vidi, vici*. I am quite charmed with my success, but is it such a long story, and I am so pressed for time, that I shall never be able to make you understand what a battle I have won. I only had his address this morning, and directly I got it, I despatched a most polite note — I have not said who the *he* was, but of course you guess — Signor Mancini. Drawing-master, indeed! Bless your dear little heart, he is one of the first painters in Rome; think of my telling him he was another Domenichino. Upon my honour, I meant it; I wish you could see the picture he is painting now — it's a miracle, that's my belief. Well, I sent my note with compliments *et cetera*, and received a laconic answer that Signor Paolo Mancini had left off giving lessons, and consequently would not give any to Miss Lavinia Jones. I was very angry with the substance, manner, and appearance of this missive. A few words in pencil on the blank page, observe, of my own note, — no envelope, no seal; a mere unceremonious three-cornered note, was all the gentleman deigned to send me. Cæsar, looking twice as black as usual, gave

me a report of the way he was received, that did not tend to mollify my anger — anger is rather a strong word — let us say my pique. He said that going into the studio was like going into a den of thieves, such an uproar of talking and laughing, he was sure they were making fun of him. Honest Cæsar is, to be sure, an odd-looking mortal, yet one does not like to have one's servants turned into ridicule. Ah! ah! Signor Paolo, thought I to myself, is this the way you treat a lady's message, and a lady's messenger? We shall see who will have the best of it; and a little plot budded in my head. Don't be alarmed, I have not offended against the rules of propriety.

“Uncle and I were just going out for a ride, to try two new horses. Uncle is *aux petits soins* to make it up with me. We went down the Corso, and as we were passing the English shop of engravings, the thought crossed me to stop and make some inquiries about this Signor Mancini. Could they tell me anything of a master of that name? Signor Mancini!!! The three notes of admiration stand for raised eyebrows, eyes wide opened, and an enormous ‘Anzi;’ Signor Paolo Mancini was one of the ornaments of Rome, a great painter, a celebrated artist; as for his giving lessons, that, of course, was out of the question. I suppose I ought to have been satisfied, and modestly asked for some other minor celebrity to be my instructor; but I seldom do what I ought, and I like best what is difficult to get; so, during a two hours' ride, I matured my project. Only let me see this painter, thinks I. My horse was spirited, and it was as much as I could do to manage him. The struggle heated and excited me. I felt in one of my *irresistible* moods, as you call them, and re-

solved to try my chance at once. I easily persuaded uncle to accompany me to Via Frattina, where Signor Paolo has his studio.

"Fortunately he was alone; and so engrossed with his painting that he never heard us go into the room, or took us for somebody else. The sound of my voice made him start as if it had been the last trumpet; up he jumped, turned round, and, instead of the spare little lad you had described to me, I found myself confronted by a tall commanding figure, with one of those large archangel's heads, that one sees so constantly in the Sistine Chapel. We tall women feel quite at ease before diminutive specimens of mankind, upon whom we can look down. But here the parts were reversed; it was I who had to look up, and my antagonist, who looked down on me from his altitude of six feet. Under these circumstances, my presence of mind forsook me for one moment; in the next I made a diversion by an exclamation about the picture on his easel. The only part finished was a group of four figures; such figures — quite splendid. I was enthusiastic in my praise; real, unfeigned enthusiasm, remember, though all the while I was studying the painter as well. I saw his colour come and go like a girl's, with pleasure and embarrassment. His hands trembled a little. It is a pity I have no time to recount all my skilful evolutions; suffice it to say I acted upon the principle that one must ask a great deal in order to obtain a little. The defence of the enemy, I must own, was long and obstinate. I had to sing tunes in every key, *arias di bravura*, *adagios*, *cantabiles*, before finding the right one; it was a *rallentando smorzato* in A minor, that won the day for me. By the terms of the capitulation, my Do-

menichino condescends to call on us as a friend, and see my daubs; which means, translated into good English, that before a week is over, he will be the most assiduous and devoted of living drawing-masters, or my name is not Lavinia. You see that, at any rate, my vengeance is not so terrible. Modesty apart, more than one of my acquaintance would envy him his post; wouldn't they?

"Ever yours in haste,

"LAVINIA.

"P. S. — I forgot to tell you that he took me for a countrywoman of his own on the strength of my Italian. His is music spoken, real *Lingua Toscana in bocca Romana*. Adieu in haste. I am in better spirits already."

CHAPTER IX.

Paolo lands in Terra Incognita.

ON the day appointed for his first visit to Miss Lavinia, Paolo, about two o'clock in the afternoon, left his studio, and sauntered along the Corso, in the direction of Palazzo Morlacchi. His step was slow, perhaps reluctant, as the step of a shy man always is, when going for the first time to meet strangers. If we are to speak candidly, Paolo would have given something at this moment, even the pleasure of seeing beautiful Miss Lavinia again, to have escaped the consequences of his promise. He would have been thankful for a respite: who knows but that she may be out, thought he, and at the thought he felt relieved.

Paolo was shy, not timid; the one does not imply the other, and, though often united, the two things are as often separated. He would, for instance, have gone to the Vatican, and told his Holiness a piece of his mind, frankly and fearlessly; but not the less would he have felt awkward and embarrassed at walking through the halls, among the guards and domestics. Timidity may be controlled by reason, or conquered by force of habit, as we see daily exemplified in young soldiers. Not so shyness. Reason and habit have no more hold on this infirmity than they have upon the hunch on your back or the wart on your cheek. It is a kind of constitutional disease, a sort of *tic-douloureux sui generis*, for which there is no cure possible. All that one can do is to check, by strength of will, its outward manifestation: an effort often mistaken for pride. The Marquis De Custine, in his work on "Russia," avers that the Emperor Nicholas was very shy. This statement, if correct, would go far to prove the truth of our distinction between timidity and shyness, as well as the peculiar nature and incurability of this last malady; for if ever there was a man far from timid, and necessarily familiar with public pomps and shows, a man feeling himself above criticism, in short, one with less reason for being shy, that man was the Emperor Nicholas.

The porter said that the English family were out. Here was a relief and a respite for Paolo, not unmingled with a shade of disappointment though. We are such contradictory creatures, that we scarcely ever know what we really wish for or what we do not. Is there, said Paolo to himself, to be no end to this annoyance? Heaven knows how much time I am to waste in dancing attendance upon this lady; heaven knows how long I

am to have this sword of Damocles hanging over me. I was wrong to accept this invitation. Mortimer was right; he always is.

As he turned out of the gate, muttering this incongruous soliloquy, he saw out of the corner of his eye a carriage full of people, and one of whom was Miss Lavinia, coming in his direction. The prospect of having to salaam in the open street, amid a crowd of her acquaintances, almost gave him a vertigo, and he hastened, as if for life, in the opposite direction. But to no avail. Miss Lavinia's eyes were apparently as sharp as his own. He was speedily overtaken by a quick step, and the black silhouette of panting Cæsar displayed itself over his shoulder. "Miss at home, sir; please, miss at home." There was nothing for it, but to turn round and face the enemy.

The course of shy people never does run smooth. The simplest act on their part, the leaving a card with a porter, or the getting into a *vettura* for Albano, is sure to be complicated by some aggravating circumstance. An introduction to these people in the privacy of a drawing-room would have been as roses compared to the thorns with which this public exhibition was fraught. These and such like confused reflections were put an end to by the silvery voice of Miss Lavinia, saying, "Oh! Signor Paolo, there's no use running away; you are fairly our prisoner," and out came the lily hand to meet and shake his own. "Mrs. Jones, my aunt, who is quite impatient to make your acquaintance, and is half jealous at my being beforehand with her." Mrs. Jones, a short, plump, handsome blonde, with a most agreeable face, said something gracious in broken French, and also shook Paolo heartily by the

hand. "The rest of the introductions," added Miss Jones, "we may as well reserve for upstairs."

A gentleman, who had been one of the occupants of the Jones's carriage, had offered his arm to Mrs. Jones, Mr. Jones had already a lady under his convoy, so that Paolo and Lavinia were left standing together.

"Shall I be your guide, Signor Paolo?" asked she good-humouredly.

The young painter had not the courage to take the hint, and offer her his arm in imitation of the other gentlemen. So they marched up the stairs singly, and entered the saloon. Here Miss Lavinia introduced Paolo to the rest of the company.

"Mr. Piper, Mrs. Piper, Signor Paolo Mancini:" adding in a lower voice, "one of the first painters in Rome."

Mr. Piper was very happy, Mrs. Piper was very fortunate. "Mrs. Piper is a capital Italian scholar, Signor Paolo," went on Lavinia.

"Uncle, here is signor Paolo, who has been good enough to remember his promise."

Mr. Jones had gone to the mantelpiece to examine the letters and papers lying on it, and this address was a reminder that he had not yet welcomed Paolo.

"Much obliged to him, I am sure," said Mr. Jones, shaking hands with the visitor.

Paolo still off his balance, and trying to recover himself, was not so self-engrossed, but that he was sensible of Lavinia's considerate care to make his reception pleasant, and able to admire her perfect ease and grace in doing the honours of the house.

A general move among the company, the purport of which he was unable to fathom, threw him into fresh perplexity. He rose, however, because he saw everyone do so.

"We are going to luncheon," explained Miss Lavinia.

Paolo smiled vacantly, as though highly pleased with the announcement, but froze inwardly at the prospect of locomotion. He saw Mr. Piper offer his arm to Miss Lavinia, and he surmised that it might be his duty to offer his to his nearest neighbour, who happened to be Mrs. Jones; but he *could* not bring himself to do so. Such physical impossibilities do exist for a shy man; Lavinia came to the rescue.

"You had better take my aunt," she said to Mr. Piper, "she does not speak Italian."

Paolo could have kissed the hem of her dress. The next moment, scarcely knowing how it had been managed, he found himself seated at table between Miss Lavinia and Mrs. Piper.

Mr. Piper and his wife had much to say about the detestable accommodation on the road. Mr. Jones echoed their lamentations. Mrs. Jones put in a word or two in extenuation, while Miss Lavinia seized the opportunity so say to Paolo, under cover of their voices, —

"I was so afraid of missing you, that I had intended not to stir from home all day, but I was obliged to go and help these newly arrived friends of ours to take an apartment."

Paolo mentally called himself all sorts of names for the grumblings and innuendoes he had given vent to, on finding the family were out.

"Who told you to open that window, sir?" roared Mr. Jones to a servant he caught in *flagranti &c.*

"I did, my dear," said Mrs. Jones, submissively; "it is so close here I can scarcely breathe."

"You might have had the goodness to observe," rejoined the husband, in a bitter sweet tone, "that I am sitting between the door and window, exactly in the draught."

"I beg your pardon. Shut that window, Cæsar," said Mrs. Jones.

She suffered from asthma, and never could have enough of fresh air, while Mr. Jones was in a perspiration from morning till night, and above all things feared a draught of air: hence two irreconcilable tendencies, which gave rise to ludicrous, and now and then, to painful scenes.

"I think I can manage to divide the difference," said Lavinia, smiling.

She went to another window, a long French window, opened the side that could not affect her uncle, and so gave satisfaction to both parties.

"Have you made much progress with your picture?" said she to Paolo on resuming her seat.

"Not much," replied Paolo. "I have scarcely touched it."

"We must take you to see it, Mrs. Piper," continued Lavinia, "that is, if Signor Paolo is good enough to allow us."

"By all means; my only regret is that there is so little worth seeing," returned Paolo.

"What is the subject, may I ask?" said Mrs. Piper.

"Brennus at the gates of Rome," answered Paolo.

"Do you devote yourself entirely to classical subjects?" simpered Mrs. Piper.

"Being a painter, where can I find better ones?" asked Paolo. "Great deeds, the noblest types of beauty, and picturesque costumes are three great desiderata, and I think you will allow that they are to be met with in greater plenty and perfection in what you term classical subjects than in any other."

"I agree with you," rejoined Mrs. Piper, "in so far as form and colour are concerned."

"Two rather important items in painting, I should say," remarked Paolo, smiling.

"Certainly; but the soul, sir, the soul," emphasized Mrs. Piper, with demure enthusiasm; "the halo of Christianity is still more important to me, and this is nowhere to be found but in modern and contemporaneous events."

Paolo did not quite understand the lady's meaning, so he said, —

"It may be so; after all, I have no objection to modern subjects."

"If so, I have a beautiful one to propose to you. The Madiasis — there's a subject for a painter!"

"The Madiasis!" echoed Paolo, rather startled. "I do not perceive—"

"Ah, sir! you would feel at once all that there is in such a subject, had you seen them as I did."

"Have you really seen them?" asked aunt and niece together:

"Yes, I saw them at Florence, not a fortnight ago," replied Mrs. Piper, laconically.

"And so did I," broke in Mr. Piper, who had not spoken till now.

The Madiais were Mrs. Piper's specialty, her *cheval de bataille*. All topics served Mrs. Piper as channels of transition to the Madiais. She went on to give an account of the Florentine martyrs, as she styled them, and of their sufferings which, commonplace as it was, and wanting in positive information, would have led any one to believe by implication, from the reticences of the speaker, and from her high-wrought tone, that the unfortunate couple had been put to the rack and broken on the wheel in her very presence. "They bear it so gently, hum, hum! so meekly, so full of faith; hum, hum! like true Christians, hum, hum!" wound up the orator. These hums, hums! were gurgling sounds between a moan and a sob, which were meant to express feelings at a high pressure.

The effect was tremendous. Mrs. Jones had tears in her eyes, Lavinia cried out it was a shame; even Mr. Jones looked indignant. Paolo alone sat cold and silent. Mrs. Piper's display of sensibility, her simpering, her cooing, jarred with his simple notions of what was true and natural, and grated upon his nerves. Above all things, Paolo hated affectation. He knew, too, of incidents of almost daily occurrence allowed to pass unheeded and unpitied, to which this affair of the Madiais, sad and odious as it was, was a mere nothing.

"Well, Signor Paolo," recommenced Mrs. Piper after a pause, "does my subject take your fancy?"

"I am afraid," said Paolo, "we painters are apt only to adopt subjects of our own choosing."

"Perhaps Signor Mancini took no interest in the Madiais," insinuated the lady.

Of course he did, but honest Paolo added, "He

feared over zealous sympathizers might spoil a good cause."

Mrs. Piper pursed up her lips, Lavinia coloured, and by way of changing the conversation, asked Paolo to give her an idea of what Garibaldi was like. Paolo not only described the appearance of the gallant general, but spoke warmly of his amiable temper, and gentlemanly manners in private life.

To talk of Garibaldi led of itself to talk of the defence of Rome. Paolo discussed the subject with modest pride, never hinting that he had himself taken his share of the perils.

"The Romans," he said, in answer to the praise bestowed on their gallantry, "had only done their duty, and would never fail to do it, whenever an opportunity offered. Had not one of their own poets sung, that it was sweet and honourable to die for one's country?"

Mr. Piper, who followed Paolo's Italian with difficulty, caught at this quotation made in Latin, to say to his *vis-à-vis*, Mr. Jones, in an explanatory tone:

"Really, we must allow that these Romans did show a good deal of pluck."

"Romans?" repeated Mr. Jones, shrugging his shoulders; "the half of them were foreigners."

Paolo was familiar enough with the English language, perfectly to seize the taunt in these words, even without the elucidating shrug of the speaker's shoulders. He coloured, and, addressing himself to Miss Lavinia, said with a certain animation:

"Suppose London were threatened by an enemy, and that people from your several counties flocked

thither to its defence, would you say that London had been defended by foreigners?"

"Certainly not," answered Miss Lavinia; "the people in the counties are as much English as the inhabitants of London."

"The same thing holds good with us," continued Paolo; "whether we are born in Milan, Turin, Naples, or Rome, little matters; we are all of the same race, blood, and language; all Italians. Why then does Mr. Jones say that most of the defenders of Rome were foreigners?"

"It is a mistake of his," said Lavinia; "our notions about Italy are rather misty, I must own."

"I wish I could speak English as well as I can understand it," observed Paolo, "that I might rectify Mr. Jones's misconception on the subject."

An awkward silence ensued. The mention of Mr. Jones's name, which recurred in Paolo's speech, the somewhat resentful tones of his voice, and the glances now and then darted by the speaker in the direction of Mr. Jones, made this latter aware that he had done or said something open to criticism, which the former took the liberty of actually criticizing. Now Mr. Jones, like many other people, did not like criticism applied to himself; and especially from an obscure painter, who but yesterday was giving lessons, and had for the first time been allowed the honour of a seat at his table. The consequence was that Mr. Jones looked mightily displeased, and wrote Paolo down in his black book.

Thus Paolo, in the first half hour of his *début* in the English family, had succeeded in securing two adversaries, Mrs. Piper and Mr. Jones. "Honesty is the best policy," is a golden saying, which answers per-

fectly well in so far as a clear conscience is concerned, and the satisfaction which is derived from that; but embark on it on your voyage of circumnavigation round the world, and for all practical purposes, see what a leaky craft it will prove.

At all events, Paolo had secured a friend in Mrs. Jones: there she sat opposite to him, as round, as plump, as innocent-looking as a quail, shooting fat and benevolence from every pore. There was something encouraging in her eye, which had been scarcely diverted from the young painter during luncheon time, something motherly in her smile. This decided sympathy had a special cause, independent of her good and gentle nature. Mrs. Jones had discovered at a glance that Paolo was very shy, and that he suffered from his shyness; and being herself a victim to this indefinable infirmity, she had felt for him the more keenly, because she felt for herself at the same time: *Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco*. Ever since she had been forced to abdicate her throne at the pickle-shop, and been launched into the great world, Mrs. Jones had never enjoyed a moment's peace. She felt displaced in her new region, her grandeur an embarrassment, the perpetual representation she was doomed to, a bore, her life a continual effort and restraint. Her feelings towards her husband were of mixed and contradictory character; he was to her a genius, the ideal of perfection, worthy of worship, and at the same time a scarecrow, in whose presence she was for ever in a tremble lest she should blunder. The constant strain on her mind, and the abandonment of her healthy and busy habits of yore, had told sorely on her constitution, and had made her delicate. She grew fatter and

more sluggish every day, and subject to alarming fits of asthma and suffocation. The great joy and pride and comfort of her life was her husband's niece, who was really devotedly attached to her aunt.

The luncheon at last came to an end, and the company rose from table. Miss Lavinia apologized to the Pipers for leaving them, but she had something she wished to show Signor Mancini, and she could not venture to waste his precious time. Paolo followed her through a suite of rooms to a very spacious one, in which was a smartly dressed young lady, sitting by one of the windows, embroidering. Taking this person for one of the family, Paolo was going to make a low bow, when he was prevented in time by Miss Lavinia saying carelessly, —

“It is only my maid.”

He noticed a harp, an open piano, with music on the desk, and heaps of music on a stand by its side, and a well-filled bookshelf.

“This is my study and library,” said Miss Lavinia; “and this,” going towards the second window, “is my atelier — rather a circumscribed one, but in proportion to the abilities of the student.”

What she called her atelier, comprised the embrasure of the window, which was very deep, and perhaps the fourth part of the room, from which it was partitioned by a screen. There was plenty of space in it for a sofa, several chairs, a small table, and an easel.

“If I am to augur of the ability of the painter by the size of the atelier,” said Paolo, “it cannot be so little.”

“Now, I appeal to your indulgence,” said Miss Lavinia, drawing back the curtain, which concealed

the canvas on the easel, and blushing celestial rosy red. The picture represented an old Capuchin friar, size of life.

"Ah! you paint in oils," said he; "it is hard work, but the most satisfactory in the end." After a moment's pause, he added, — "You have had no model, I perceive, and as yet you cannot do without. You had better hire one, there are plenty to be had — at rather a high price, to be sure, for they are very exacting with foreigners; but I dare say you will not mind a scudo or two."

"Oh! no," replied Lavinia, with a slightly roguish smile, "my difficulty has not been the money. I had nobody but cicerones to apply to, and I was afraid to trust to their recommendations."

"I will send you a model, if you like," said Paolo; "a handsome old man with a beautiful beard, just what you require for your Capuchin."

"Pray do," said Lavinia.

Paolo found little to praise, and much so find fault with in Lavinia's picture. The design was tolerably good, but the colouring bad — the drapery quite a failure. She used too many colours; blue, yellow, with some white and red, were quite enough for beginners. There was also great stiffness in the lines, as if the hand did not work freely. Would she take a brush, and let him see her manner of using it? Miss Lavinia put on her blouse, and began to paint.

"Ah!" says Paolo, "I see what it is: you grasp your brush too tightly."

She tried to hold it less firmly, but only succeeded in letting it drop.

"I will show you," said he; "give me your brush, if you please."

"Are you not afraid of getting some of the paint on your coat?"

"No; not with merely a few strokes," he replied.

"Why shouldn't you put on my blouse?" asked the young lady.

"Why not, indeed?" said the young man, and the transfer was effected, not without some little laughter from both parties. Paolo, long after he had shown her how she ought to hold her brush, went on as if in sport, touching the picture first here, then there, until the old monk looked quite another creature.

Mrs. Jones coming in, and finding him thus occupied, sat herself down quietly on the sofa, and gazed complacently at him.

"Isn't she very clever?" asked she, of Paolo, after a while, drawing her niece towards her, and giving her fair cheek a kiss.

"Oh! aunt," protested Lavinia, returning the kiss.

"And as good as clever, I can assure you, Mr. Paolo."

"Indeed, I do not doubt it," said Paolo, rather fervently, taking off the blouse, and sitting down at the little table. The two women holding each other by the hand, formed a graceful group; the contrast of the two heads could not be greater, or more piquant: raven-haired the one, full of character, decision and passion; all soft fading hues the other, breathing softness, sweetness and melancholy. A sun rising on a fiery July morning, a sun setting on a calm October evening.

Paolo, continuing the conversation, took up a pencil, a sheet of paper was lying temptingly under his hand; in a quarter of an hour he had made a sketch of the two ladies, and showed it to Mrs. Jones. No wonder she was in raptures with it, for it was a little masterpiece. She begged him to put his name to it, which he did, with a protestation against its being worth keeping.

Lavinia let Paolo look over her sketch book, showed him twenty volumes of French, Italian and German, which she said she was then reading, and on Paolo's expressing some wonder at her undertaking so much at once, she affirmed that she found time for all she wanted to do. What an active mind! thought Paolo, and thus they chatted on. Paolo was not a little astonished that he should feel himself, as it were, quite at home.

"Do you play the harp?" asked he. "I saw one as I came into the room."

"I like it as an accompaniment for the voice," said Lavinia: "shall I sing you something?"

"It would be a great favour," said Paolo.

She sat down to the harp, and preluded on it. She was beautiful thus, her attitude bringing out in relief the chaste outlines of her figure. Paolo could not help saying, —

"You make me think of Corinne."

"Do I?" answered Lavinia, blushing, though well accustomed to compliments. "What shall I sing?"

"Anything; only I pray you, let it be simple and melancholy."

Lavinia thought a little, then sang, — "She's far from the land where her young lover sleeps," one of the sweetest of the Irish melodies. Paolo drank in

eagerly every note of that superb voice. The winning simplicity, and touching melancholy of the air, went straight to his heart, and sent tears to his eyes.

"You remind me now of Frezzolini, when, as Desdemona, she sings the song of the willow," he said, after a silence more eloquent than words.

Lavinia held up her finger threateningly, —

"Flatterer!"

"Did I not tell you," said Paolo, "that I never pay compliments?"

He rose to take leave.

"When will you come again?" inquired Lavinia.

Paolo hesitated.

"You promised to find me a model, you know," she went on.

"I shall not forget," he answered.

"Then you will come again not later than the day after to-morrow."

What could Paolo do but agree? Aunt and niece went with him through a private passage communicating with the hall.

"When you are so kind as to pay us a visit," said considerate Mrs. Jones, "should you prefer avoiding the round by the drawing-room, the servants shall have orders to show you in this way."

"Thank you," said Paolo, greatly relieved at the prospect of coming and going without meeting Mr. Jones. "Thank you very much."

"What a charming, clever creature he is!" exclaimed kind-hearted Mrs. Jones, as soon as Paolo was out of hearing.

"Yes," echoed Lavinia, "a charming — *enfant terrible!*"

I only wish he would not wear such clod-hopper's shoes."

"You ungrateful, silly thing, to be thinking of his shoes!" said the aunt, laughing.

Paolo meanwhile, as light as a feather, was hastening in search of the model.

"If it were not for that grim Mr. Jones, and those horrid footmen of his, it would be a treat to spend an hour or so every day with those two women," thought Paolo to himself. "Both simple, unaffected, and considerate, the girl so energetic, so gifted, and so beautiful into the bargain. Intercourse with such as they are, could not fail to do me good both as a man and an artist. The mere presence of women has in it a gentle, refining influence nothing else can replace."

Paolo felt so calm, so serenely cheerful, that he could not help laughing inwardly at Mortimer's sombre prognostications. What a thousand pities that such a noble, excellent nature as his friend's should be disfigured by the false notions he entertained about women! Surely, if he were acquainted with this aunt and niece, he would be speedily reconciled to the fair sex. Paolo must manage to make them acquainted with one another.

CHAPTER X.

Miss Lavinia's Diary.

"DEAR LADY AUGUSTA,

"I TOLD you in my last, that before a week was over, my Domenichino would be the most assiduous and devoted of drawing-masters. Well! it will be just a week to-morrow since he first called, and I have already had three lessons. So, you see, I have redeemed my pledge. It is true, that to achieve this victory, I had to make an enormous outlay of amiability, which, after all, did not require much effort; indeed, I believe, it came quite naturally. He is so thankful, so —, what shall I call it? — that it is a pleasure to oneself to please him. I like him very much, aunt doats on him, and he on her. It is surprising how they have taken to one another, and with such scanty means of communication too, for her French is very limited, and so is Signor Paolo's. Uncle is not over-fond of him, of course; Paolo wounded him in some way, as he did Mrs. Piper, who lunched here the same day that he did. He is a sort of *enfant terrible*, who speaks out what he has in his heart, not much used to society, I should imagine. At times as bashful as a girl, at others as bold as Hotspur. He never pays compliments, not even to me. The way he treated my Capuchin friar was too cavalier by half; it was dreadfully discouraging, I told him so yesterday. We have become great friends now, so I do not mind telling him what I think. He laughed, and said, 'I was harsh, was I? It was all for your good, and because I perceived that you had some talent. Nothing spoils promising beginners like praise, nothing

spurs them on so much as a proper degree of severity. I have been told that Rossini, whenever he is applied to for his advice by a hopeless singer, always dismisses him or her with unbounded praise, while he finds plenty of faults with one who is full of promise. 'The method has its advantages.' Now, isn't that an original way of giving encouragement? Originality is an item, it must be allowed, of which there is no lack in Signor Paolo; whatever he does or says, has a peculiar flavour of its own. And as to being clever, no one in their senses can deny his being wonderfully so. You have no idea what he can produce with only a few strokes. I wish you could see my Capuchin since he touched him up. It was really a lucky star, which guided me to such a delightful man; he amuses, interests, and puzzles me to a degree. If he would come sometimes of an evening, I should not much mind having no parties.

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"He spent last evening with us, and a most pleasant evening it was. Do you think it was an easy favour to obtain? Not at all. Aunt and I had to promise that there should be nobody but ourselves. The gentleman never goes into society; detests formal parties. I told you he was a perfect savage, but a very amiable, agreeable one, worth a dozen of civilized mankind. I made all sorts of discoveries about him. Indeed, the more I see of him, the more he realizes all my fancies about these Italians; those men, you know, of whom we read that they could do everything, artists, poets, warriors, statesmen — Leonardo, Michel Angelo, Salvator Rosa, Benvenuto Cellini, and the like. Well, this Paolo Mancini is as good a poet as a painter, and improvises poetry quite easily. He says that he has a

friend, who never speaks but in verse, and that improvising is quite common among Italians. I gave him some rhymes, and he actually extemporized a sonnet on my portrait. By-the-by, I must give you his. Half a head taller than I am, a powerful-looking, fine figure, a profusion of black curling hair, dark olive complexion, a delicate mouth, and beautiful teeth; hazel eyes with yellow strokes, now soft and sweet, like a wild deer's, now sparkling and terrible, as one fancies a bandit's. You ought to see them when he speaks of the Austrians; they grow black then. He gave us several anecdotes of the last war, and a full description of the defence of Villa Spada on the 30th June, 1849, which made one's flesh creep. The loss of the Romans at that place was dreadful, many of their best officers there met the death of the brave. The emotion of Paolo on speaking of these fine fellows was infectious; so much so, that aunt, who understands Italian but imperfectly, was actually sobbing, and I was scarcely less moved. His pantomime is as eloquent as his speech. Fortunately, uncle was not at home. Signor Paolo's account was so very circumstantial, that it came into my head he must have been at Villa Spada himself, and I asked him. He got as red as fire, and acknowledged the fact. 'And but for my curiosity,' said I, 'you would not have told us?' 'Of what use mentioning it?' he replied.

"There's a piece of modesty for you. I am certain he did wonders. By a skilful cross-examination, I came to the knowledge that he was one of a band of young artists, who, it seems, volunteered to serve under Manara. Some of them were mere boys. Paolo was not eighteen. He talked a great deal of an English-

man, a great friend of his, who made the campaign with them. Paolo spoke with enthusiasm of this Englishman; he says that he is the noblest and most generous fellow on earth, and that he owes all that he is to him. I made him promise to bring this excellent friend to us. I long to know him. I begin to feel an interest in these political subjects I did not think myself capable of. I always hated politics in England. But there is a something romantic here in Italy, a perfume of old chivalrous times, that awakens my sympathy. Signor Paolo is to accompany us to-morrow on a sight-seeing expedition.

"P. S. I have found out a delightful milliner, she is far superior to Alexandrine for bonnets. Adieu!

"P. S. (the last.) I forgot to tell you that Signor Paolo declared that my way of dressing my hair — diadem fashion, you know — is quite artistic, and that he is astonished and charmed at my being called Lavinia. *Apropos* of this name he added something — I did not make it out very well — about Lavinia, the wife of Æneas; and the Romans, the Transteverini especially, boasting of being *sangue Trojano*, the consequence being that I was somewhat of a country-woman of his.

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"I thought I had known a great deal of Rome, but I was mistaken. One must see Rome with a guide like this young man to form any real idea of it. He knows it by heart. Listening to him, old scenes revive as if they were of to-day. I am in a fit of ancient Rome fever. I long to do something like the Clelias, Camillas, or Cornelias. How amazed you would be if, one of these days, I was to turn out a heroine! Sometimes

I fancy — now don't laugh — I have within me the stuff, of which heroines are made. A little more and I shall wear a tunic, and a peplus. The Forum, the Capitol, the Mount Aventine, the Coliseum! what grand names, what grand associations! That awful tragedy of Virginia, I saw enacted over again before my eyes: — the monster Appius on his tribunal; the sweet victim; old Virginius, all dusty with his march from Mount Algidio; Icilius, the affianced lover, boiling over with passion, striving to arouse the crowd; the citizens within the Forum, touched, yet inert; — I saw them all breathe, speak, act, move like creatures of flesh and blood at the bidding of this young magician. I stood in the very place where Virginia fell, transpierced by a father's hand. The butcher's stall, from which Virginius snatched the cruel knife, was at the south-west corner of the Forum, near the three columns which beautify the ruins. From thence we went to the place of the Capitol, where Tiberius Gracchus was slain. Signor Paolo is a fervent admirer of the Gracchi, and a thorough hater of the patricians, their destroyers. The Gracchi, according to him, never dreamed of a new division of property; all they advocated was, a less iniquitous partition of the public lands, usurped by the patricians in defiance of the law. The Gracchi were the first to proclaim the existence of other rights than those of the Roman city — to have what Signor Mancini calls the Italian sentiment, as opposed to mere municipal feeling; and this was an unpardonable crime in the eyes of the nobles. 'Italy to the rescue,' was the dying cry of Tiberius Gracchus. His brother Caius died for the same cause on Mount Aventine. Whatever we may think of their motives, no one can help being struck by three

such heroic beings as these brothers, and their mother Cornelia. The Campagna, seen at this season, is splendid; nothing richer than its warm yellow tints. It has all the grandeur of the desert, but relieved of its uniformity by a series of endless undulations. We had to cross it on our way to the meadows of Quintius, where once was the farm of Cincinnatus. This was the spot where the envoys of the Senate found him guiding the plough, and, after he had put on his toga, saluted him as Dictator. The very simplicity of the scene invests it with a grandeur that no pageantry could give. I made this remark to Signor Paolo, and that it struck me as a beautiful subject for a picture: he agreed with me, and said he would at least attempt it. I was so pleased; I feel very proud to think that a new masterpiece of his will be owing to my suggestion. Aunt was too tired to walk, and remained in the carriage while we examined the place. He is just the proper height for me — half a head taller than I am — and his step suits mine exactly. I am not reduced either to run by his side, or to stalk like a grenadier. Then his arm is so different to lean upon from uncle's thick one. These trifles are no trifles in a long walk. I never walked so far before without being tired.

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"I forgot to tell you of our stumbling on such a beautiful group of pifferari as we were driving through Campo Vaccino. There were three of them — an old man, a young one and a boy — all with the finest heads and most picturesque rags conceivable. The boy, especially, was a treasure-trove, such long curly hair and sparkling black eyes; he looked like an untamed colt. I observed what charming models they would

make, and Signor Paolo immediately alighted, and, after speaking to them, brought me word that they would call the next day, and sit for me, at a certain price per hour. Now these are the sort of considerate attentions that please me; he really does seek to make time pass usefully. Another little adventure — but not of quite so agreeable a character. I must premise, that when we went out this afternoon, there was a carriage and four standing at a door a few yards from ours. The horses were four splendid animals, sixteen hands high at least, English thoroughbreds. You know that I pique myself on being a good judge of horses, and I warmly expressed my admiration of these beautiful creatures. Their harness, I saw, came from England, and that made me say, I supposed it was an Englishman's equipage. Signor Paolo said, No; it was that of Prince Rocca-Ginestra. 'A fine name, and a finer title,' observed I. 'If I were a man I should like to be a prince, shouldn't you?' It would seem Domenichino did not relish this remark; at least, I guessed as much from a shade of irony conveyed by the tone of his reply: 'Why, I do not know indeed; a title is only a label on a vase; all depends on what is within: at all events, I would not be the Prince of Rocca-Ginestra.' 'Why not?' asked I. 'Because he is —' Signor Paolo hesitated, as if in search of a proper expression, then wound up with 'because he is the last man I would like to resemble.' No more was said on the subject. Well, two or three hours after, as we were driving home through the Corso, what should we meet but this very same carriage and four. The person on the box, who was driving — evidently a gentleman — stared fixedly at us — I ought to say at me — as the

carriages were crossing each other; then, as we drove past, he stood up and never ceased looking at us so long as we remained in sight. I saw a flash of anger in Signor Paolo's eyes as he turned round with some impatience, muttering something to himself — I thought, but I could not be sure, that it was the word 'Sfacciato.' 'What are you looking at?' asked I, in some uneasiness. 'I am showing my admiration of a piece of princely insolence,' retorted he, bitterly. Now, the fact is, that if not absolutely insolent, the prince's persistence in staring at *us*, was, to say the least, highly unbecoming; but, seeing Signor Paolo's exasperation, with a view to soften it, I chose to overlook, or rather pretend not to have perceived, any cause of offence in the prince's behaviour. 'So much the better,' said he, drily; 'you are the best judge, after all, since it was you, not me, that he looked at.' And he remained sullen and silent. He accompanied us to the door of our apartment, but declined aunt's invitation to come in, and left us with a cloud on his brow. How touchy he must be to take up such a mere trifle in that way! Really, the effect was out of proportion to the cause. I fear my Domenichino has by far too violent a temper. I could not help thinking of this silly affair all the evening.

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"I had a new illustration last night of Signor Paolo's impetuosity, though, I must own, I fairly brought it upon myself by my rashness. Uncle was dining at the Pipers', and we went to see the Coliseum by moonlight. I waive all description, as the solemn grandeur of the scene admits of none; or, if you must have one, I refer you to the best I know of — Byron's canto fourth of *Childe Harold*. We went round the arcades

of the great oval, previous to climbing to the upper part. Signor Paolo was evoking the past with his usual eloquence, and filling the gloomy solitude with the din and strife of life; — men reared to die handsomely, gracefully, in cadence, in fact, making an art of death; vestals looking on with the gaze of connoisseurs, and *not* lifting up their thumbs for those who had fallen ungracefully; the sword plunging; thousands applauding. Horrible! The way he pictured all this told so powerfully on my nerves, that a sudden noise, and rush past us, threw me off my guard. I started up, and was so foolish as to utter a cry. As you may well imagine, it was but a dog or cat whose slumbers we had troubled. Aunt came up with Cæsar in some alarm, and I laughed at my fright, but I was not the less ashamed of having made myself such a goose, especially in the presence of a gentleman. Aunt did not feel inclined to climb up to the upper part of the building, and said she would wait for us below; so we went, Signor Paolo and I, in search of an opening. I was the first to see one, and made for it. ‘Not that way,’ cried out Signor Paolo; ‘it is unsafe; there is written on that pole, you see, a warning to visitors, of its being dangerous.’ I was glad of the opportunity of showing my companion that I was not one of the women suited to a milk-sop, and answered, laughing, ‘When our Serpentine is frozen over, there are plenty of poles with warnings where the ice is weak, but the notice has no other effect than that of attracting crowds of skaters to those very spots. English men, and women too, court danger, you know;’ and then up I went as fast as I could. He rushed after me as quick as lightning, and caught me so roughly by the arm that he

hurt me. 'You are hurting me,' I exclaimed. 'Come down then at once, or I shall lift you down,' was the laconic answer. The iron grasp left me no alternative, and so down I came, but highly provoked. 'You might have been a little less violent, sir,' I said. 'Trample me under your feet, if you like; but, for God's sake, do not give me such another fright,' and he gasped for breath. I looked up at him; he was the colour of ashes, and shaking from head to foot. I was disarmed. 'Indeed, I will not,' said I; 'I did not mean to pain you.' 'Pain me?' he echoed. 'If anything were to happen to you, only think!' then he stopped. There was not much in the words; but the look and the accent — really, I dare not fathom the depth of what they implied. I pleaded fatigue, and put off the ascent to another time, and hastened to rejoin my aunt. I am full of misgivings; that look and that accent — oh, dear! Do what I will to get rid of them, I cannot; they haunt me.

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"It was all a fancy; a trick played on my nerves by that awful Coliseum. Signor Paolo has called here each of the three last days, and stayed for hours, and nothing disagreeable has happened. I don't believe there was a shadow of a foundation for my stupid alarm. How foolish and how unjust I have been! That's the worst of being a beauty, one is always too much on the alert. Paolo is as natural, as much at his ease, as *enfant terrible* as ever, so far as my painting is concerned. Certainly, he does not spoil me about that; delicate shades of expression are not his forte. What he considers bad, he calls bad as a matter of course. However, he has been of the greatest use to me with

these pifferari; but for him I never could have managed them, especially that wild, lovely urchin, restless as quicksilver. As it is, I have succeeded in chalking out my group; a *tolerably* good one, he says. I would not be helped. If he has a will of his own, so have I. Yesterday he brought his English friend with him, Mr. Mortimer Thornton, a very gentlemanly person, but cold and dry like a black frost. He reminds one of the statue of the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*. I don't like him; uncle does. After Mr. Thornton's departure, he came to my atelier — uncle, — I mean, and was very civil to Domenichino. From this, I conjecture that Mr. Thornton had been speaking in the young painter's praise. Uncle said to Signor Paolo that he must paint my portrait. Signor Paolo coloured as usual, and expressed his willingness, but said the light was not good enough here, and that he should have to beg me to go to his atelier. Uncle asked if I should have any objection. Of course, I had none; so it is settled that on the day after to-morrow I am to sit for my portrait. Signor Paolo is confident of its turning out a great success; he said as much when uncle had left the room. I feel quite elated, and a little nervous also at the prospect. I delay sending this to tell you of my first sitting.

* * * *

"It proved a solemn *fiasco*; in fact, I did not sit at all, owing to —, what do you think? — to a whim, my dear, of my Signor Domenichino. I had no sooner taken off my cloak, than he grew scarlet, and I saw by his face that something was amiss. He cannot dissemble. His countenance is a mirror in which all that passes within him is reflected. He regretted, he said,

that we had not agreed beforehand on the sort of costume I was to be painted in. The style of dress I had chosen was too showy for a portrait, at least, for such a one as he had imagined. I shall leave you to judge whether he was right or not. I had on an evening dress of white satin, trimmed all round with quillings of *tulle de soie*, headed with tiny roses. Then he found fault with my *coiffure*, it was too elaborate. Nonsense! A *cachepeigne* of small roses, half hidden under a bow of *tulle*, with long *barbes* falling over my shoulders; do you call that elaborate? Could there be anything more simple? He was not done yet with his grievances; the skirt of the dress was denounced as too ample, creating a want of harmony, a dissonance in the *ensemble*, — his very words. You may well imagine, dear Augusta, that I did not look particularly well pleased with all this criticism. ‘Statuary, that is, nature,’ he continued, ‘is the unerring test of the beauty of human form; and whatever goes against this test, is ungraceful. Be you yourself the judge,’ said he, gallantly; and he immediately made a little sketch, and handing it to me, added, ‘That is, I assure you, the precise outline of your figure, and I am sure you have too much good taste to wish to be so portrayed.’ So far, I must confess, that if the drawing he made was not a caricature, my appearance was anything but artistic. I had a frightful resemblance to one of the figures in the *Courier des Dames*. I do not, however, mean to say, that I had in the least trespassed the limits set by fashion; but what looks well enough in the drawing-room, may be objectionable in a picture. I felt rather abashed, and must have looked so, as he continued with more

gentleness, 'Perhaps my notions about simplicity may seem *exaggerated*, but you will kindly make a sacrifice to my idiosyncrasy.' I answered that I would willingly conform to his wishes, but that I owed it to myself to say, that I did not consider that there was any *exaggeration* in my dress, that is, taking into account what was the fashion; and that ninety-nine women out of a hundred would wear, when in full dress, a much wider skirt than the one I had on. 'I believe so,' said Signor Paolo; 'but that is not a reason, it is only a proof that bad taste is prevalent. Majorities are not blindly to be trusted.' The sentiment, and, still more, the cutting tone in which it was uttered, irritated me, and I asked, rather sharply, 'Are minorities, then?' 'Perhaps,' said he, gravely, 'if you question history, it will answer you that all great men and women were in the minority.' 'As I am not a great woman, nor have any ambition of becoming one,' said I, 'allow me to side with the greater number.' 'As you please,' was the dry answer. We parted coldly. Signor Paolo is to paint me as he first saw me, in my riding habit, and no *coiffure*, but my hair dressed as I usually wear it, in braids, and a wide plait diadem-like. Aunt says she never saw him so ill at ease, so constrained in his manner; that he must have had something on his mind. Certainly, he was unlike himself, and did not appear to advantage. Painters and poets are proverbial for their whims, you know, and he is both one and the other. Adieu, with my love.

* * * * *

"Just another line to tell you that I have had a splendid sitting of two hours and a half, including re-

spites, chatting, laughing, singing, and what not. How droll he can be when he chooses! I thought that if there was a fault in him, it was gravity, but he is not grave at all. To see him mimic the fantoccini *au naturel*, to hear him repeat the witty puns of Pasquin and Marforio, and lisp like Tartaglia, is a treat worth any comedy. Aunt was black in the face, and I laughed till I cried, though, heaven knows, I had put on a mask sullen enough when I first sat down. He had perceived it, as he confessed afterwards, and was determined to put me in a right frame of mind to be painted; and he succeeded, for it is impossible to be angry with this extraordinary wild Roman. My picture is coming on beautifully; I think he was right, after all; there will be much more character in it than if I had been dressed in my white satin. One of his ideas is, that there must be a constant talk kept up between him and his sitter; it is the only means, he avers, to catch the easy, natural expression of a countenance; and most portraits look constrained and stiff from the want of this desideratum. Mine, certainly, will not sin in this particular; — how we rattled on about art, nature, literature, music; how wonderfully our tastes agree!

“LAVINIA.”

CHAPTER XI.

Horoscope and Pyrrhic Dance.

PAOLO, on his side, was so much satisfied with the result of the conversation just alluded to in Miss Lavinia's diary, he had had such a dip as he conceived it, into Lavinia's innermost soul, and found it in such perfect unison with his own, that he felt quite proof against all Thornton's ominous prognostications; and half a smile played on his lips at the elongated face and the gravity of his English friend, when he came, a few days afterwards, to report on what he was pleased to call his reconnoitrings.

When first apprised by Paolo of the wish expressed by Mrs. Jones and her niece to make his acquaintance, and of a half-promise to that effect given by the young painter, Thornton had winced considerably, protesting that he had not settled at Rome for the purpose of meeting his own country people. On second thoughts, however, he had changed his mind, called of his own accord at Palazzo Morlacchi, and freely discussed Mr. and Mrs. Jones with Paolo afterwards. But as to Lavinia, short of expressing a general wish that she might resemble her aunt, he had declined giving his impression, until he should have seen more of her, and made assurance doubly sure. This he had now done, and the horoscope he drew of Miss Jones was gloomy enough. A bewitching creature, he owned, but shallow, and worldly; belonging, he regretted to say, to one of the worst varieties of the species Fine Lady — "the aspiring."

"That is classifying with a vengeance," said Paolo, quietly; "now for a little definition, if you please."

"It is a structure so complicated, so full of hooks and crooks, the product of a state of things, of a course of circumstances so peculiar, and so far away even from your most distant conception, that it is as difficult for me to define as for you to realize it. An aspiring fine lady is a bad copy, with all the defects and none of the good points of a but indifferent original — a being conventional from top to toe, one who feeds on shams, hunts shadows, and is impervious to realities."

"The picture is rich in colour and flowing in circumstance," replied the Roman; "but I humbly confess to a want of penetration in perceiving in what it applies to the young lady in question, unless the widest sympathies with all that is simple, good, and beautiful, be but conventionalism — unless an exalted sense of nature, poetry, and art lay one open to the charge of feeding on shams, and hunting after shadows."

"Ah! you are already under the spell," sighed Thornton.

"If you have decided that it is so, then let it be so — what is the use of further argument?" said Paolo, in a tone of resignation.

"A childish whim about painting, which will last just so long as it has the attraction of novelty, and the little romance in which it originated, you exalt into a passion for art — a few fine phrases on poetry and nature, you receive as an irrefragable test of feeling and simplicity of taste — fashionable dilettantism you construe into a right earnest vocation. It is mistaking a lamp for the sun, my dear friend; therein lies your

deception. Those are poor votaries of the true, the simple, the beautiful, I can tell you, whose whole heart is set upon the world and its baubles. Would you elicit genuine sparks of fire from her eyes and soul? Discuss with her the fashionable news, as I did; the marriages in high life, the *déjeûner dansant* at the marchioness's, the duchess's carpet dance."

"It is out at last," exclaimed Paolo, vehemently. "Miss Jones, very likely, lays more stress than either you or I do, on accidents of birth and station — she has been brought up in that creed; and upon what is, after all, a harmless bent of her mind, you rest her indictment and condemnation."

"Your harmless bent of the mind, I beg you to believe, may be fraught with practical inconveniences of a very serious character. Rank fever is a most dangerous distemper. Marry a duchess or a factory girl, above or beneath the infection, that's my advice."

"Mortimer," said the painter, half teased, half disposed to laugh, "I'll marry nobody; I am in love with nobody — there!"

"Give me a proof that you are not," continued Mortimer. "Come with me to Paris."

"To Paris?" exclaimed Paolo, reddening. "Show me good reason for doing so, and I will go. Have you any pressing business there, which cannot brook delay?" and Paolo looked full into his friend's eyes.

"You know I have not. Suppose it is one of my whims. Very well: accept and humour it."

"I would at once, but that it interferes with the commonest decorums of life, and with — my self-respect."

"How do you mean?" asked Mortimer.

"I mean that I have pledged myself to assist and direct this young lady in her study of painting; and that, short of behaving like a boor, I cannot, without a strong motive, withdraw from my engagement — I mean, that I have accepted a commission pressed upon me by Mr. Jones himself, to paint his niece's portrait."

"A rare piece of madness that," interrupted Mortimer; "but leave it all to me, I'll take whatever odium may accrue upon myself."

"But you cannot take upon yourself the ridicule I should incur in my own eyes. There is something degrading in the notion of running away like a child or a fool; running away from what, I should like to know?"

"He asks from what!" burst out Mortimer, with an appealing look to the ceiling. "From what? why from certain mischief. There is no ridicule in a man's seeking safety in flight from agencies beyond his individual control."

"Such as floods, earthquakes, and Miss Lavinias," said Paolo, jestingly.

"You could as soon withstand a flood or an earthquake as the fascination of that young lady: it is fated, I tell you, that if you go on seeing her, you will go crazy about her in no time. Now put this fact in juxtaposition with this other one, that your nature and Miss Lavinia's are antagonistic in every respect; you need not shake your head, they are exactly the two poles; and you will see what will come of it."

"I will tell you what will come of it," replied Paolo, "if you kindly abate a little of that extreme fascination and of that extreme antagonism, a pleasant intercourse and a disinterested friendship."

"Was there ever such a delusion as this?" exclaimed Mortimer. "Friendship! she is of the clay whereof men make idols, not friends. A perfect siren from top to toe; see her at her harp, and try not to fall at her feet; hear her sing, and do not worship her! There is a seductive charm in inhaling the same air she breathes."

"Eh! eh!" laughed Paolo; "how your subject warms you! I begin to suspect you feel the spell yourself."

"Fiddlestick!" ejaculated Mortimer, rising.

"And that you want to get me out of your way," continued the young man.

Vexed as he was, Thornton could not help smiling at this preposterous charge, and at the roguish solemnity with which it was made. As smiles, however, tallied ill with his present Mentorlike mood, he went to the window as if to look out at the weather, and said gravely:

"The subject is too serious a one to admit of jesting; reconsider my proposal, and be wise for this once. Adieu."

Paolo did not reconsider a proposal, which seemed to him too absurd to deserve even a moment's discussion, and brought instead all his powers of self-investigation to bear upon the question of whether he really was guilty of being in love, or even in a fair way of becoming so. Thornton's persistence on this point had ended by creating some little alarm in the young man's mind. A man in love, reasoned Paolo, or one nearly so, must feel differently from a man who is not so. Now, go through what self-examination he would, he perceived no sensible change in himself from

what he was seventeen days back, when this Miss Lavinia was for him a nonentity. He was haunted by none of the phenomena which attend the sweet torment of love, of which he had read in the poets; he had no restlessness, no desire of solitude, no sickening alternations of hope and despair, of elation and depression, no irresistible craving, to consign any name to the echoes of mountains and valleys; of all such notorious accompaniments of the tender passion he was as yet innocent. He felt as self-composed and companionable as usual, was not the least disposed to sigh or to shed tears; nor was he aware of any the slightest alteration in his perception of things. That he greatly admired Miss Lavinia he freely admitted; but Mortimer admired her also, and Mortimer laughed at the idea of being in love with her. That he had great pleasure in her company was true, but not beyond what was reasonable, not more, probably, than he should have in the company of any other lovely and accomplished person. Just now, for instance, he had not seen her for two whole days, and yet time had not hung heavy on his hands: no doubt, he would be glad to see her again; nevertheless, he was not ready to tear his hair out of impatience. He had done for her, he owned, what he would not have done for anyone else, undertaken her portrait, and undertaken it with enthusiasm; but then he had never before met with so beautiful a model, and he was not an artist for nothing. Admiration and sympathy were not love.

Thus far the account was smooth; still there remained an obscure item to clear up, a something that did not fit quite exactly into the mould of sympathy and admiration he had so nicely arranged — we mean

the sudden panic he had taken about Miss Jones at the Coliseum, and the irresistible impulse under which he had acted at the time. Surely, what he had felt just at that instant, was most strange, mysterious, and quite new to him. More than once had he seen some of his best friends in jeopardy, and felt for them acutely; yet never had his whole being been shaken from its foundations, never had such a fit of frenzy seized upon him, as on that evening at the Coliseum. Still, there was a perfectly natural way of explaining even this, in the vagueness of the danger itself, and the circumstance of the person in peril being a woman. Might it not also have been the sense of his own responsibility, the aunt having confided her niece to his care, which, suddenly striking him, had entirely upset him? Imagine, in fact, the horror of his situation, if any mischief had occurred, and he had had to go and announce a catastrophe to Mrs. Jones, what would Mr. Jones. . . .

Here a whiff of the war-song in Norma, *Guerra, guerra*, &c. given forth close at hand, at the highest pitch of a well-known tenor's voice, broke the trains of Paolo's speculations, and made him clap his hands, and say aloud: "Here is the very man I want; if Salvator Rosa, who has been in love these four years, does not know everything about love, nobody does;" and he went immediately to open the door, a happy thought, as it proved, for the new-comer was so encumbered, that he could never have opened it for himself.

Salvator had a guitar slung round his neck, some wearing apparel on his shoulders, a big bundle on each arm, a round hat on the top of his velvet cap, a couple of palettes in his left hand, a quantity of brushes and pencils in his right, and a huge German pipe in his

mouth. In this old clothesman's accoutrement, he sprang into the middle of the room, and threw himself into a warlike attitude, waving his brushes over his head.

"In the name of reason, what is the matter with you?" asked Paolo. For all answer to this question Salvator shouted forth anew, *Guerra, guerra, morte, sterminio*, &c., leaped forwards, then backwards, parried a blow from the left, dealt a tremendous thrust to the right, and finally fell into a war-dance with a vigour that sent most of his encumbrances flying about the room, yet with a gravity which Paolo's roars of laughter did not in the least disturb. Nor did a single muscle in his face relax, until he dropped into a chair, wiped the sweat off his brow, and said with a hearty laugh, "I hope you approve of my Pyrrhic dance."

"It has singularly cannibal looking features to be the classic offspring of antique Hellas."

"I have introduced a few variations," panted forth Salvator, "with a view to adapt it to modern times and tastes. It is symbolical of art, outraged in my person, consigning to the avenging deities Barbarism personified by landlords."

"You talk in riddles," said Paolo.

"To explain," resumed Salvator, "you see in me a victim, *un innocente vittima*, he sang forth; a victim of a landlord's — what shall I call it? I wish to be parliamentary — of a landlord's indelicacy. You see in me the pearl of tenants, as far as good-will goes, turned out like a dog from his stately suite of — a single room, under the most aggravating circumstances. *Al sol pensarvi, o cielo, insieme avvampo e gelo*. But what could I expect of an Ostrogoth, who wears a pigtail, and is tetragonal enough to the fascination of the fine

arts, to prefer a paltry sum of four scudi, three paoli, and two bajocchi, to the honour of having his features transmitted to remotest ages by the pencil of Salvator Rosa the Second."

"Mighty short-sighted of him," observed Paolo; "yet as the landlord bargained for money, it is but fair that he should have the choice."

"So far granted," said Salvator; "whatever may be my particular reasons for preferring to pay in kind to paying in cash, I fully admit his claim to the latter mode. It is to the Goth-like manner of enforcing this claim, that I object. Now, I make you the judge between us." The little man rose, went up the room with the approved stage stride, seemed to listen, looked to the right and left, as tenors are apt to do, who are about to put the public in the confidence of some mighty secret, then stepped forwards again, took Paolo, by the wrist, and gave forth close to his ear a most tremendous "*Ascolta!*"

"This morning about nine, I went as usual to fetch wherewithal to restore my exhausted frame, a penny roll, and a dozen or so of roasted chesnuts; — allow me to add a cheap, savoury, nutritious breakfast, and one I highly recommend. My purchase had not consumed many minutes. Well, back in the innocence of my soul, *senz' alcun sospetto*, — back I climb to my garret, when lo! — *qual si mostrò spettacolo* — *all' atterrito sguardo* — everything I possess, scattered about the landing-place, my guitar, my palettes, my precious manuscripts rolling in the dust. I put my key in the lock in vain, the lock had been changed. Was this a shabby trick, or was it not, I ask you?"

"Most shabby indeed," emphasized Paolo.

"What could I do, but gather my baggage together, and go? But the difficulty was whither to go. Presently, I remembered you, and your double wigwam, and sang to myself, — *Io so chi la s'onora pura ospitalità*, and here I am, to beg a few nights' lodging, till I can decide whether to hire a villa in the suburbs, or a palace in Piazza di Spagna."

"You are welcome to my former kennel, such as it is," said Paolo, pointing to a recess concealed by a screen; "but I warn you it is not very desirable; think once again if you had not better make it up with your landlord."

"Never!" interrupted Salvator; "such an act would be nothing else than an encouragement to all unfeelingness and shabbinnss, it would be inconsistent with my principles. Pay him I shall and will as soon as I have the paltry coin; but let him tremble in the meantime for it — that shall be his punishment. As to you, most noble friend, your sheltering walls shall have as little of my company as possible — just from ten in the evening to seven in the morning."

"Very good," said Paolo; "but I do not see, why being my guest at night should deprive me of your visits during the day. Make yourself at home; only mark, that canvas which is there, turned with its face against the wall, is tabooed, and so is smoking for a little while."

"A word to the wise," replied Salvator; "discretion is my motto."

"And now that these preliminaries are settled," said Paolo, "tell me how is Clelia. I have not seen her this age."

"As far as health and spirits go, Clelia is quite well thank you."

"Has she any work to do?" asked Paolo.

"Just enough to keep body and soul together," was the answer, "the demand for cameos is far from brisk just now."

"No near prospect of bringing your long engagement to a happy close?" inquired Paolo.

"No more than we had when we pledged our faith to one another — four years ago next Christmas. Poverty still puts in her veto, but still we are happy. We live on in hope and love."

"By-the-by," went on Paolo, with a shade of embarrassment in his manner, "I wish you would give me a description of your sensations at the time you were falling in love."

"Halloa! Telemachus, my fine fellow," shouted the little painter, with an eager glance at his friend, "are you going to enter the great brotherhood, eh? The sooner the better, I can tell you."

"No such thing, I assure you — not I indeed," replied Paolo, with a slight blush; "when that happens, I will tell you faithfully."

"Well then, let me think how it was I felt, when I was falling in love," said Salvator, with a reflective air; "upon my word, as far as I remember, nothing particular. It didn't come bit by bit, that I am aware of — I believe it came all at once. The instant I felt something, it was done and over."

"But while it was going on — let it have been for ever so short a time, it is contrary to nature that you should not have had any forewarning, that it was an

incipient passion. Were you much struck by her beauty at first?"

"Not much, not more than I should be by any pretty face I met in the street. It is true that I was ill at the time: I first saw her in the hospital. You know I was laid up for two months there, by a bad fever caught by sleeping on the wet ground out of Porta San Pancrazio: a long time it seems now since that 1849. She was one of the voluntary nurses who attended the sick in that hospital, and she used to come and pet and cheer and comfort me, which made me feel very grateful and very happy."

"Had you no occasional fit of restlessness, despondency, sleeplessness, no loathing of your food?"

"As long as the fever was on me I had; but as soon as I got rid of it, I slept very well, ate with relish, and was altogether very comfortable."

"Did you fret when she was after her usual time?"

"She never was late, so I had no occasion to fret, nor had I strength to do so either; a babe three weeks old could not be more weak and helpless than I was."

"Very strange," said Paolo, pondering, "and never —"

"Stop a bit," interrupted Salvator, "here is a symptom for you. A fortnight previous to my leaving, a young officer was brought in, badly wounded — a Tuscan — poor soul! he died shortly afterwards. I must first tell you he was uncommonly handsome, rich curly hair, deep-set brown eyes, a perfect Rafaelesque head. I have a sketch of him somewhere that I will show you when I can find it. Very well, his bed was opposite

to mine, and whenever Clelia was by his bedside, I felt most uncharitably towards that noble young man."

"It was jealousy," pronounced Paolo.

"I suppose it was; but it did not enlighten me a bit as to the state of my heart."

"And when was it," asked Paolo, "that you discovered its real condition?"

"On the very day I left the hospital. I had such a pang in parting from her, it was like parting from my very soul. I reeled about like one who had lost his centre of gravity; I was positively miserable. I felt no interest in any earthly thing, no, not even in the Libretto. Then it was, that I did begin to feel restless, that a frantic yearning after her seized on me. At the end of the second day, I could stand it no longer. I went back to the hospital, saw her for half a minute, and said to her, 'Will you be the wife of a little monkey, who has nothing to offer but his great love for you?' She blushed, and laughed outright, and said she must have a fortnight to think about it. The answer came at last, and on that very day we were affianced, and since have lived on hope and love, and indeed very little else;" and the narrator wound up with, "*Della terra in cui viviamo — Ci facciamo un ciel d'amor.*"

Little wiser by this confession, nay, rather more puzzled than he was before he received it, Paolo wended his way towards Palazzo Morlacchi, with an unusually thoughtful countenance.

CHAPTER XII.

Paolo feels Uncharitable.

PASSING through the reserved passage to Miss Jones's studio, Paolo found nobody there but Lavinia's maid. She was waiting for him with a message from the ladies, to say that they had visitors in the drawing-room, and particularly requested him to join them there. Paolo would fain have made his escape, but as usual his shyness came in his way, and even while still debating with himself how he could decently beat a retreat, the doors of the drawing-room had closed upon him, and he was undergoing an introduction to Count Mendez Fortiguerra and Cavaliere Martucci.

This Cavaliere Martucci, the reader may recollect, had met the Jones's at Florence, had promised to find them out at Rome, and to make them acquainted with a friend of his, a Roman noble. Both of them handsome men in their own styles, the appearance of count and chevalier offered a most striking contrast.

The count was nothing by half; very dark, very tall, powerfully built, and with a loud deep bass voice; his features, though good and regular, were too strongly marked to be agreeable, his big aquiline nose in particular, and his well-cut, but salient lips, the *beau idéal* of animalism. A blue tint about his mouth and on his closely-shaven chin, bore witness to a beard as thick and deep-set as a hog's bristles. His manner and address were those of a man of the world, easy and dignified; rather too dignified, for now and then they forced on one the recollection of the *padre nobile* of the stage. When at rest, which was but seldom the

case, the count had a way of burying his chin in an uncommonly high and stiff cravat, which attitude, combined with a forehead naturally broad and lofty, and rendered still more so by the complete absence of hair, gave him an air of depth and wisdom that might have suited the most profound diplomatist. Although he had reached full threescore years, he looked scarcely fifty. He was in deep mourning.

Not quite five feet high, but remarkably well-shaped and well-proportioned, Cavaliere Martucci was the prettiest little blondin that one ever set eyes upon. Despite the soft golden down on his upper lip, elaborately twisted *en croc*, he might at first sight have been mistaken for a woman in disguise, so unquestionably feminine were the small plump hand, the diminutive foot, cherry lip, rosy cheek, pink ear, the skilfully-parted golden hair, and the silvery thread of voice; the little gold circlets he wore as earrings, tended still more to increase the illusion. His dress in excellent taste, was as trim and precise as if he had been brought hither in a bandbox, and turned out of it in the ante-chamber. His turned-down shirt-collar fell over a fancy satin necktie, his wristbands fastened by coral buttons, closed round his wrists, as symmetrically as if they had been painted; nor were any of the innumerable, almost imperceptible plaits of his shirt-front in the least ruffled. A very microscopic star attached to a very microscopic chain, hung from one of the button-holes of his coat.

The conversation, or rather conversations — for Count Fortiguerra's was in English, and particularly addressed to Mrs. Jones, while Cavaliere Martucci's, being Italian, was for Miss Lavinia's especial benefit

— the conversations, we say, for a moment interrupted by Paolo's entrance and introduction to the strangers, were speedily resumed. The count went on descanting on the virtues, attainments, and *sans façon* of his Majesty Lewis, late king of Bavaria, then a resident in Rome, and, as it would seem, one of the count's particular friends. The chevalier, on his side, was describing with rapture to Miss Jones a new song by Patito, the famous composer of ballads, and eagerly expressing his astonishment, that a young lady possessed of such musical talent as Miss Lavinia, should be so far behind the rest of the fashionable world as not to have heard of *La Lagrima di un Angelo*. Why, it was quite the rage among amateurs.

Paolo who knew nothing of H. M. Lewis, nor yet of the romance in vogue, took no share in either of the dialogues, beyond a brief answer to any of the direct questions, occasionally put to him by Miss Lavinia, with the evident intention of making him a party to what was going on. Besides that he was naturally but little communicative in the presence of strangers, these two, and more especially the lesser of the two, raised his bile — and why so? It is self-evident that they both stood in his way; but it was the small chevalier that engrossed Miss Lavinia, and thus more directly interfered with Paolo's own time — atime, he began to think, which might be better employed than in listening to nonsense. Because after all, he was not there for his own pleasure, he was there to criticize Miss Jones's drawing, to give her advice, — in short, call it by what name he would, the fact was patent to himself; he was there to give her a lesson. Nor was it just to lay all the blame on the visitors, Miss Lavi-

nia herself was in fault. What, in the name of wonder, could keep her rooted there? Had she never deserted company in the drawing-room to attend to her painting? She showed, he was sorry to feel, but little consideration in detaining him thus.

Making these ungracious reflections, our young savage mechanically took up a pamphlet lying on the table within his reach. It proved to be a number of an illustrated English serial — Paolo turned over the pages, examining the engravings; Miss Lavinia presently, perhaps to make him feel the impropriety of thus isolating himself, pointedly addressed him, saying,—

“You seem mightily interested in your book, Signor Paolo.”

“Rather diverted than interested,” was Paolo’s reply; “such a droll picture as I have chanced on,” and he handed the open book to the young lady. The illustration represented a number of young ladies kneeling before a huge coronet. First, as Lavinia cast her eyes on it, she blushed, and then burst into a merry peal of laughter, that sent a thrill of delight through Paolo’s whole being. He said with a smile, —

“I see, at all events, you do not belong to that pious sisterhood.”

“I should like to know who does,” returned Lavinia; “I beg you will not imagine that my countrywomen are so silly as that. It is a caricature, the splenetic production of a misanthrope, that’s all.”

“O Thornton, Thornton, why are you not here?” thought the young man; and addressing Lavinia, “Of course, I look at it as an exaggeration; I do not suppose any rational being worships such baubles,” and

his eyes, perhaps intentionally, rested upon the chevalier's little star.

Did the chevalier notice that glance, or did he not? Would he resent it, or receive it in a Christian spirit? These questions must remain unanswered, for just then in bustled Mr. Jones, and the *salamalecs* began. The chevalier, as in duty bound, introduced the Roman to the Englishman, the Englishman to the Roman. His noble friend Count Mendez Fortiguerra — his distinguished friend, Mr. Jones. The two great powers, Purse and Pedigree, bowed, then shook hands, declaring their mutual satisfaction at being thus made acquainted. Purse's satisfaction was alloyed by the mortification he felt, at having kept Pedigree waiting. Pedigree, feeling that *noblesse oblige*, protested with a bow to the ladies that time in such delightful company fled too fast to be perceived.

Whoever may have accused Mr. Jones of having something morose and forbidding about him, bore false witness. Just look at him now, and say if man ever possessed a smoother brow, a sweeter smile, a greater amenity of manner. Mark the softness of his voice as he expresses the hope that the count is fairly settled for the winter in Rome, and that he will often honour him and Mrs. Jones with his company.

A cloud of sadness overshadows the count's lofty forehead, as he murmurs a regret about a late painful loss — a family affliction (with a plaintive look at his mourning costume) which at present debars him from either going to or receiving company at his own house.

Mr. Jones's jaws droop with potent sympathy, and the sunshine of eye and mouth subsides into a placid melancholy.

"Such is life," observes he, with a sigh; perhaps

by a natural filiation of ideas, the mention of sorrow suggests to the Englishman's mind the expediency of a dose of comfort, and count and cavaliere are invited to pass into an adjoining room, where they will find some refreshment.

Count Fortiguerra, who is perhaps a teetotaller, will with pleasure accept a little sugar and water, and the trio make their exit with all due ceremony.

Paolo, who for the last ten minutes, has been opening his eyes wider and wider, who has been asking himself, whether or not he was witnessing the performance of a comedy, now draws a long breath of relief. So, to say the truth, does Mrs. Jones — so does Miss Lavinia. But the burden of the day is not yet over. Mr. and Mrs. Piper are announced, and in steps Mrs. Piper in a state of great excitement. Miss Jones now tries to make her escape by pleading an engagement, but the lady will not listen to any such excuse; she wants Miss Jones; she declares she has designs on Miss Jones, she must have Miss Jones all to herself. Perhaps Mrs. Piper insists the more, because she notices Paolo's look of vexation. There is nothing for it but to yield. Paolo rises and takes his leave — Lavinia, making many apologies, accompanies him to the door of the room, and lets fall in his ear a gracious promise, to sit for her portrait on the morrow at twelve o'clock. With this bit of comfort to feed on, Paolo departs.

He knew not where to go, he knew not what to do with himself. For the first time in his life, his studio had no attractions for him, nor had he any inclination for Thornton's company, hitherto his harbour of refuge in troubled weather. There was only one person for whose conversation he just then felt any desire, and

that was his houseless friend, Salvator; but how to track him? it was like looking for a bird in a wood.

He walked straight on in the direction of the Pincio, musing the while, "Where the deuce could that theatrical-looking count, and that ridiculous manikin of a cavaliere come from? Why ridiculous? because he was so small and feminine-looking? Was not Salvator but little if any taller, and with an appearance equally feminine? yet had he not inspired a beautiful and sensible girl with a devoted love? True it was, that Salvator had sterling qualities, and a heart of gold. For anything that Paolo knew to the contrary, the chevalier might be as well gifted. Miss Jones certainly seemed anything but displeased with the proprietor of the little star. Women do not see with men's eyes. Well, whether a hero or a pickpocket, what business was it of Paolo's? — his business, since he had been stupid enough to let himself be so entangled, was to direct the young lady's artistic studies, and not to take upon himself the duties of a commissary of police, *apropos* of any man, preposterous or not, who might make her acquaintance."

And forthwith he dismissed this subject from his meditations, and began to think of something else; but just as any road will lead to Rome, according to the proverb, so did thought upon any object, however distant, infallibly bring him back to the point from which he had started.

One thing he could not forgive Miss Lavinia, and that was the sort of mystery she had made about this man. It was clear that she had known him for some time, and yet she had never mentioned even his name to Paolo, never so much as alluded to any such ac-

quaintance. It would have been so natural, knowing so very few Italians as she did, that she should have spoken of this one, said that she expected his arrival. She had judged otherwise; perhaps she had her own reasons for making a secret of it. Once more, whether she had or not, what was it to him? The best thing he could do was to enjoy his walk: a beautiful place this Pincio, and such a lovely day!

But the wisest resolutions were not able to struggle against the new bent of his mind, and in another moment he had relapsed into his former mood of conjectures. "What could be the link between Mr. Jones and these two Italians? for, that theirs was not a mere visit of compliment, but had a specific purpose which concerned Mr. Jones, was self-evident; otherwise, how account for their waiting for him in so determined a manner, quite beyond the limits of any usual visit? The very eagerness with which Mr. Jones had manœuvred to take them away to another room, left no doubt in Paolo's mind that the move was to secure a private conversation. It was as clear as that blue sky over him, that the three gentlemen had some interest in common, which required privacy, and that he had been in their way. In the name of wonder, what grand state affair could it be?"

At this point a sudden light illumined the mind of our young dreamer, and caused him to quicken his steps, like one who all at once discovers himself to be treading on mined ground. The mystery was solved, the manikin was a lover, the Padre Nobile, an uncle come to back his nephew's suit, the subject to be discussed, a proposal of marriage, of course, no sooner made than accepted. The riddle would have been no

riddle to any one with a grain of common sense, and here he had been for hours tasking his brain to find out, what a child commonly gifted would have guessed at the first glance. Fool that he was! ha! ha!

And the poor big boy went on walking until dusk, and with only a short halt at Lepri's for a morsel, even till long after dusk, nicely smoothing and arranging, and turning into mathematical evidence, the wildest dreams of his fancy, on the whole not without a kind of savage pleasure; and lashing himself into a most intolerant mood towards counts and chevaliers — then asking, with a dawn of incipient consciousness of playing the hypocrite with himself, what business was it of his, whether Miss Jones married or not? What would he not have given to have overheard the dialogue, which was being carried on during his feat of pedestrianism, and to listen to which, the process not being over delicate, it is our painful duty to request the reader.

In a back parlour of a low tavern in Transtevere, Count Fortiguerra and his diminutive Achates were discussing, not precisely some nice point of heraldry, left perhaps obscure by D'Hosier and Co., but a huge flask of Montepulciano; the count with lustrous eyes and flushed cheeks, no longer in state costume and stiff cravat, but quite in a *sans façon* attire and mood in keeping with the place and his present convivial occupation. The chevalier was still smartly dressed, but his late display of fine linen and golden star eclipsed for the nonce by the intervening folds of a loose overcoat buttoned up to the chin.

"I will tell you what your Englishman is," said the count, lighting his short blackened *brûle gueule* at

the oil lamp on the table. "Oh, my poor quotations of Horace! *projicere margaritas* —— he is a thorough grocer."

"Suppose he is," remonstrated the chevalier, delicately rolling a cigarette between his natty thumb and forefinger, "suppose he is, reason the more for handling him gently. Here is a man who is mad for a ribbon, a star, for anything that can give him any kind of title whatever. What is the rational course to pursue? To present the affair as feasible certainly, but nevertheless not without its difficulties, its divinities to propitiate by proper sacrifices; between friends, to squeeze as much oil out of this English whale as one can. Instead of this, what do you do? You perplex and alarm him with a railway speculation, outlay of millions, years of waiting."

"At the end of which I attach a splendid bait," interrupted the count, "the title of prince, bestowed by a grateful gracious pope on the enterprising contractor. You have still much of the greenness of spring about you, my dear little friend. My schemes, I perceive, have too much of maturity in them for your youthful vision. Learn this, in the first place, that to tempt an Englishman, who has been in business, there's no lure so great as a speculation in railways, no title, no ribbon, none, though it were as broad and as long as the iron road itself. Learn, secondly, that if I could get the name of this Mr. Jones, the chairman and contractor for the what's its name railroad in England, to figure at the top of a prospectus of a railroad, were it to the moon itself, my fortune and your fortune would be made. How could I guess, that this man was to be unlike all other John Bulls, without love of enterprise,

heavy with objections, full of caution, wanting proper securities, and so forth — devil take him! As if my word was not the best of securities, the word of a Fortiguerra!!!” emphasized the speaker, thumping his breast. “Do you know who the Fortiguerras are, my fine fellow” — (the fine fellow addressed was the flask) — “the oldest family in Italy, nay, in Europe, allied to the Gonzagas of Mantua, related to the Royal House of Braganza ———”

“You forget the Grand Mogul,” added the chevalier gravely.

“Excellent! capital!” cried the count, falling back in his chair in a paroxysm of laughter, combined with a fit of coughing, owing to a volume of tobacco smoke inadvertently swallowed. “Here is an artist! I take myself in real earnest. I imbue myself so entirely with the personage I am to represent, that I positively forget my own individuality. When I die, an event the longer delayed the better, I shall be able to exclaim like Nero, ‘O Rome, what an actor thou locest!’”

“Some truth in what you say,” observed the chevalier, daintily knocking off the ashes of his cigarette; “only now and then you overdo your part.”

“Not a bit,” protested the count; “I proportion the shades of my colouring to my audience. But what were we talking of? Ah! you were criticizing this railway scheme. Granted it is a failure, nevertheless it will give us some of the advantages of a victory. Through it I have gained two important points. I have *posed* myself before this man, and taken his measure, height, depth, breadth — I know him inside and out.”

“Well, if you have got his size and weight, don’t beat about the bush, but go straight to the point. Fix

a sum, the highest you prudently can, to serve as the golden open sesame of the bureaux, there is always some deaf, blind, halt official to be made to see, hear, and move, — and as soon as you have the money, let the fool have his hobby-horse. To fabricate a document with all the proper state seals and signatures is mere child's play for you."

"So it is, but it won't do with Mr. Jones. He is far too sharp, and we shall never see the colour of his money, short of satisfying him as to the how, the why, and the by whom — *quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando*. Circumstantial evidence will not do with him. Talent and industry can do much, but not supply reality. I flatter myself that I could personate Cardinal Antonelli — his Holiness — anybody. I once acted a bishop in Mexico, a country without its fellow for that sort of thing; and I did it so well, that I actually took myself in, as well as other people. But the local colouring is not at my command here. I cannot borrow the palace of Monte Cavallo, nor ask for the loan of the Vatican, nor get possession of the *Dateria*. Can I?"

"Not so easy in fact," replied the chevalier, in a dandified voice, "but methinks you exaggerate your difficulties. Surely, it has been said by some wise lips, that when a man is in earnest pursuit of a thing, he will swallow even a camel if it stood obstinately in his way."

"Ah! my dear fellow, rules have exceptions. You have no idea how without poetical imagination these islanders may be; how matter of fact they can be. Trust to my penetration, this Englishman will give us a deal of trouble. Even if he be ever caught at all, which I doubt, it must be with some other kind of

chaff. We might try him in the artistic line, with objects of virtu, antiques and pictures. He knows nothing about them, nor does he care a straw for Art; but he might be got at through the ladies. The young one, a splendid creature by the way, has a smack of a painter about her, and seems as inflammable as a lucifer match. A well-concocted tale of a reduced nobleman obliged to part, but anxious to do so unobserved, with the remnant of a once princely gallery — a few Lionellos, and Lorenzo di Credi; none of your Raphaels, or Correggios; they are too hackneyed. Such a story, I say, would take her fancy."

"It might," said the chevalier, "were it not for that young Mancini (and I am told that he is clever), who, being, as you saw, on the best terms with the whole tribe of them, is certain to be consulted, and as certain to make our mine explode."

"I will undertake to make sure of the young fellow," asserted the count, potentially.

"More easily said than done," retorted the chevalier. "He looks very high and mighty, and puts on the airs of a Puritan. There's some story current about him, in which Bishop Rodipani figures. The particulars I don't exactly recollect; but I remember enough to assure you, that they give little reason to hope."

"To be sure," exclaimed the count; "didn't some one point him out to me as the bishop's nephew? who told me, I wonder? It must have been that rascal of a reverend brother of mine. I will ask him for particulars. Whoever he be, leave the young painter to me; I go bail for him. Nothing so easily tamed as your independent genius: two or three swings of the incensory under his nose, sufficient to inflate his nostrils

with the smoke of the gums and spices of flattery, and an order for pictures, such is my recipe. I will give him a commission, if needs be, of the value of ten thousand scudi."

"Which will not drain your purse dry," laughed the chevalier, "any more than the two hundred thousand scudi you volunteered this morning to invest in shares of the new railway."

"A capital proposal that, was it not?" said the count, laying his forefinger under his left eye, and investing his face in the most blackguard look imaginable.

"Now, you are beginning to make faces," remonstrated the chevalier; "pray recollect yourself."

"Well, well, you are right; let us always look the dignity of our parts. What was I saying? ah! about the two hundred thousand scudi. The proverb runs — Strike hard, if you want to strike home. A few bold strokes of that kind constitute what I call a large style. Mine is Michael Angelo's manner."

"I wish you could have seen yourself at the moment: you were really superb; you looked as much in earnest as if you had had the whole amount in your pocket."

"I was not sure that it was not there. That is the secret of my superiority. Be strongly impressed yourself, if you would strongly impress others. *Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi*, as my favourite beautifully expresses it. Are you going already?"

"I must," said the chevalier, looking for his hat; "it is past nine, the rehearsal of the ballet at the Apollo will soon be over, and Amina would scratch my eyes out, if I was not there when she leaves the theatre."

"Ah! the little figurante!" said the count, with a grimace, the racy roguishness of which no words can render.

"There you are again with your grimaces! you are really incorrigible;" and the chevalier looked as he felt, sullen and reproachful.

"Now, don't be sulky; the idea of the little figurante threw me off my guard. O youth! silly youth! to run after such vanes as women, when such staunch friends as Montepulciano and Orvieto coax you to stay. Take another glass."

"Not a drop more," said the chevalier; "I have had enough. It is a mystery how you manage to go on swallowing flask after flask, and that, too, after having emptied one of Mr. Jones's decanters of sherry."

"That is it; you have hit on cause and effect," replied the count. "I correct the acidity of that violent adulterated stuff the Englishman gave us, with this gentle, cooling, genuine produce of the Tuscan hills."

Upon this, the two worthy associates separated. Just at the identical moment, Paolo was knocking at the door of his own studio in Via Frattina.

"Are you here, Salvator?"

"Yes, I am in bed; come in!"

"Don't budge, I am only come to say that I feel dreadfully uncharitable towards some one."

"That is it," returned the voice from within; "hurrah! then you are jealous."

"I am afraid I am; not a very amusing trade, though."

"It will give a relish to your feelings afterwards. The sooner the better, as I told you."

"If they are roses, they will blossom in good time.

Do not go out to-morrow morning before I come.
Good-night, Salvator."

"Good-night, Telemachus, and pleasant dreams."

Paolo went his way home, and Salvator turned himself in his bed, humming —

*"Son geloso del zefiro amante,
Che ti scherza col crine e col velo,
Fin del sol che ti mira dal cielo,
Fin dell'onde che specchio ti fa."*

CHAPTER XIII.

Nettle and Dock.

GREATLY relieved by the avowal he had made to himself, and the confession to his friend, Paolo slept soundly, and awoke next morning in good spirits. His first thought on opening his eyes, was, "So then, I am in love." Well, he could not help rejoicing at the question being at last solved and settled in that way.

It was but the realization of what he had been so long yearning after; and if a man had ever reason to be happy and proud of being in love, certainly he was that man, considering the object — for, thank God, it was at no common shrine he had been led to worship for the first, and as he felt assured for the last, time in his life. If he had the stuff of a man in him, as he hoped he had, she was exactly the woman to bring it to light. So beautiful, so lofty minded, so overflowing with healthy, noble aspirations! Where the deuce had Thornton's penetration gone, that he should misjudge her as he did? The day would come when his friend would render her more justice. Paolo felt confident of this. She was to be his Laura, his Beatrice, his Muse, his —

Here the image of the chevalier intruded disagreeably on Paolo's mind, and brought his soliloquy to a full stop. But he was not in a temper to be long disturbed by hindrance in any shape. Well, let the chevalier do his best; he, on his side, would do his best also. Of course, he could not expect to secure such a prize, without meeting with competition. Who could see and not love her? Even Thornton had acknowledged the charm there was about her. All that Paolo desired or wanted, was a word — no, only a look — of encouragement, and he would fight all the world to win her.

After all, he had been, perhaps, too hasty in attributing to the visit of the two strangers the motive he had done; perhaps before many hours had elapsed he would be ready to laugh at his own wild suppositions. Most likely, either Mrs. Jones or her niece, during the morning's sitting, would refer to the subject of these new acquaintances, and thus enlighten him. If there were no mention of them, it would indeed be a bad sign. However, let the worst come to the worst, he was ready for any rival.

Amid such speculations, Paolo arrived at his studio in Via Frattina. Faithful to his word, Salvator was waiting for his friend, munching his dry roll and roasted chesnuts, and reflecting on the number of sparrows, daily pensioners, fed by crumbs scattered from his garret windows, doomed this morning to disappointment and hunger.

"And our uncharitable feelings?" asked Salvator, by way of greeting. "As strong as ever, I hope."

"Not so intense as last night," said Paolo.

"They will intensify by and by, no fear. Iarbas has been here."

"Who is Iarbas?"

"Emperor Soulouque, our black friend; he has brought a note for you. I anticipate a crisis."

Paolo snatched the note, broke the seal, and read: —

— "Thursday evening.

"Mrs. Piper has taken us by storm. Nothing will satisfy her but our going to Frascati. We are all to start to-morrow at daybreak; we shall be away only three days — one to go, one to remain, and one to return. I am sadly disappointed to miss my sitting. On Monday morning we count on seeing you. I mean, be sure to call.

"Yours in haste,
"L. J."

"Gone!" exclaimed Paolo, dejectedly.

"Gone?" echoed Salvator, starting to his feet in great alarm.

"Yes, to Frascati for three days," added Mancini.

"Bless me! how you do frighten one, I declare! *Son rimasto senza fiato. Non ho sangue nelle vene.* I thought she was for ever gone. Three days is the very thing, neither too much nor too little, just the proper degree of stimulant to bring the precious germ to maturity."

"No need for stimulants, I am afraid," said Paolo; "methinks the germ is ripe already."

"Is it?" retorted Salvator; "ah! what did I tell you? the moment you perceive it the business is done. Never mind this absence; it is all for your good, though

not very pleasant; for what does the libretto say? — *Da quel di che lei perduta, Disperato in bando andai*, &c. You will feel the happier when she returns. It is like leaving one's bed of a winter's night; you enjoy its comfort more keenly afterwards. In the meantime, you can think of her, and speak of her to me. There's a comfort for you."

Truly Paolo had not a pleasant time 'of it. All his buoyancy, in so far as Miss Jones was concerned, was gone, and every one of his doubts and misgivings returned. Despite of all that he could say to himself, or that Salvator could say to him, he was haunted by the idea that that hideous chevalier was one of Mrs. Piper's party. "We all start to-morrow;" that "we all" was by far too elastic a formula. It would have been far more simple and natural to state, "the Pipers, aunt, uncle, and I," if there were no one besides. Ten to one but the count and chevalier had dropped in while that busybody, Mrs. Piper, was planning the trip, and, discovering that they were Italians, no doubt she had asked them for directions and advice, and all that sort of nonsense. Then Mr. Jones, fancying himself very clever, would request the *padre nobile* and his small satellite to give his party the benefit of their company, and local knowledge. Oh! yes, Paolo could guess it all. There were spare seats for them, of course, in one of the carriages, for two carriages there must have been. The Joneses, Pipers, and a servant, made six; well, one carriage would not hold six, and with luggage too, — it was quite out of the question; they must have had another abominably convenient vehicle of some kind or other.

That was the gloomy side of the note, but it had a

bright one also, and on this Paolo embroidered also very freely. Miss Lavinia did not seem to expect much pleasure from the excursion — “she was sadly disappointed to miss her sitting,” sweet soul! There was honey in the assurance, “we shall be away only three days;” these words clearly implied that she would have been sorry had the absence been prolonged. Then the “be sure to call on Monday” indicated some impatience to see him again. Really the note was most friendly.

Little or nothing was changed in Paolo’s external habits of life. He felt Thornton’s searching glance was on him, and was on his guard accordingly. For nothing in the world would he have let his friend guess at a result, which Paolo candidly acknowledged to himself was but the confirmation of that friend’s anticipations, and at the same time the broadest contradiction of his own. He accordingly stuck to his atelier and his work as usual, even cracked jokes with his comrades whenever an occasion presented itself, but — his thoughts were elsewhere. The only alteration in his habits he ventured on, was the taking a solitary walk of an evening towards Porta S. Giovanni, the way to Frascati.

The three days dragged on, and Monday came, but, alas! bringing back no Lavinia. Mrs. Piper had prevailed on her, explained Mrs. Jones, to stay a few days longer. There were some interesting places yet to be seen, and then the beautiful weather was in itself a temptation to remain in the country. Paolo, with a very lengthened face, agreed to all this, adding that Miss Jones was quite right to profit by this oppor-

tunity to make excursions, especially in such agreeable company.

Mrs. Jones did not think her niece particularly liked either Mr. or Mrs. Piper's company; at least, she knew that Lavinia and Mrs. Piper disagreed on many points. Paolo's mortification at Miss Jones's prolonged absence was greatly soothed by the certainty, that there were no counts or chevaliers of the party. Luckily in this world the dock grows near the nettle. Mrs. Jones had unawares extracted the sting from his thoughts. That was a relief indeed, but it did not prevent his annotating bitterly on his own annotations of the young lady's note. He was glad to see that her disappointment as to her sitting had not preyed much upon her. She knew how to reconcile herself to circumstances. Impatient to return? why should she be so? for his sake, perhaps? a droll enough notion. What did she care for him? *Lontano dagli occhi, lontano dal cuore* — Out of sight, out of mind: proverbs are the condensed wisdom of humanity.

Upon this understanding with himself, Paolo, with great consistency, resumed his pilgrimages to Porta San Giovanni, accompanied by Salvator, who by-the-by sang to him arguments of comfort to all tunes, and out of all imaginable operas. He recommenced counting the days; dear me, how many more! one, two, three, four, five, six — at last, on the seventh, there she was queen-like, full of health, of spirits, of enthusiasm about the Belvedere, Tusculum, Villa Ruffinella, Grotta Fer-rata, the frescoes of Domenichino, and everything else she had seen.

Certainly, there was no trace left about her of time having hung heavy on her hands; but Paolo had no

heart to find fault, so cordially did she hold out her hand to him, with such frank sincerity did she declare how sadly she had missed him when looking at the splendid frescoes of Grotta Ferrata, adding, in a tone which he could not disbelieve, that she was so glad to be back again, and to be able to resume her sittings; would the next day suit him? She was very impatient to see him at work again. Paolo was by this time swimming in a sea of bliss.

Miss Jones sat for her likeness the next day, and the one following that, for many hours. Paolo was in a splendid vein; the portrait improved wonderfully. The young lady gave him in detail the impressions of the scenery and the works of Art she had seen, and Paolo ceased to wonder that, with such eyes and such a soul as hers, to appreciate the beautiful in all its forms, she should not have found the time long at Frascati. As the course of conversation would have it, Lavinia mentioned the count and the chevalier; this latter with an adorable indifference, which went straight to Paolo's heart. Never had she been more communicative, more expansive, more confidential. Mrs. Jones's manner, always kindly and affectionate towards the young painter, had in it now a touch of motherly tenderness. It seemed as if this short separation had inaugurated a new and more intimate phase of friendship between them. It could scarcely fail that all the gentle and delicate parts of Paolo's character should be brought into play by such genial and exciting influences.

When she was taking leave of him at the end of the second sitting, Mrs. Jones told Paolo that they reckoned on having the pleasure of his company at dinner on the following Saturday. He was to receive

a more ceremonious invitation, but she warned him beforehand that he was not to refuse. Paolo's first movement was certainly to decline this invitation; but, on Miss Jones adding that it really was a *dîner sans façon*, only a few friends, and that she would allow of no excuse, what could Paolo do but bow his head in submission? Had she ordered him to go and take Castle Sant' Angelo single-handed, he would have gone and tried!

Lest we should unwillingly lead our readers into error, we must advert to a circumstance which had its share in the redoubled show of friendliness evinced by the ladies towards the young artist; not that we mean to deny that meeting again, even after so short an absence, an agreeable and obliging acquaintance, was not for something in Miss Lavinia's warm and kind manner towards Paolo: we mean only to say that there was more than one cause for the effect. The fact is that Paolo had been the subject of a rather disagreeable domestic scene, which had made him an object of more interest than ever to aunt and niece, as will always be the case with considerate and chivalrous natures, who see a friend underrated, and unjustly dealt with.

Having now secured a well-organized *personnel*, Mr. Jones determined in his wisdom to shine forth on the world of Rome, in the character of an Amphitryon. To achieve this solemn purpose, he drew up a list of his most distinguished acquaintances, and handed it to Mrs. Jones, with the intimation that cards of invitations to dinner were to be sent out for the earliest day possible. The count and chevalier, as due to their rank, figured at the top of this list, which comprised, besides, Mr. and Mrs. Piper, Mr. Thornton, the Honourable

Captain and Mrs. Paddock and their son, but lately introduced by the Pipers to the Joneses.

"You have forgotten Signor Mancini," observed Mrs. Jones, innocently.

"Who? the drawing-master?" retorted the husband; "I am not going to invite him with people like these."

Honest Lavinia, who was close by, arranging some flowers in a vase, coloured up and said drily, "I have told you more than once already that Signor Mancini is not a drawing-master. He is a gentleman and a celebrated artist, who is good enough to give me the benefit of his advice out of mere kindness. He is as much a gentleman as any of the persons you wish to ask."

"If he *is* a gentleman," resumed Mr. Jones, "he has not the manners of one; at least, if you will allow me to know what a gentleman is. At all events, I suppose I am master here, and may choose my own guests."

"No doubt of it," replied Miss Lavinia, standing very erect; "you may have the enviable power in this instance to inflict an undeserved slight on a person who has shown us all great kindness and courtesy, but do not expect to have me as an accomplice in what I deem wrong. I shall stay in my room on the day of your party, if Mr. Mancini is not invited," and Miss Jones left the room abruptly, with a significant toss of the head.

This scene had occurred after breakfast on the morning following Lavinia's return, and consequently an hour or so before the first of the two sittings last mentioned. Both aunt and niece were still under the

influence of its painful impression, when they reached Paolo's atelier, and their extra graciousness to him proceeded from an instinctive wish to make him amends for the discourtesy of which he had been the unconscious object, by showing how much they regarded him.

Nothing came of Mr. Jones's wrath. Blustering and trenchant as he was, he was no match for his niece, whose spirit and determination always cowed him. Among the cards of invitation, which lay on the table next morning, ready to be sent out, there was one whose blank was filled with the name of Signor Mancini. Thereupon, a silent reconciliation took place between uncle and niece; and it was after this happy treaty of peace, that Mrs. Jones warned Paolo he was to be asked to the dinner-party.

Paolo's heart sank when, in the afternoon of the second day's sitting, black Cæsar brought to his lodgings in the Via Babuino, a big despatch with a seal the size of a crown piece, which contained the promised card of invitation, with a N. B., requesting the favour of an answer. All this fuss (we beg pardon for the expression, which is not ours, but the young Roman's, a thorough stranger to the genteel ways of society) made him augur ill of the *sans façon* of this family dinner, and Thornton, who came in with a similar huge envelope in his hand, at once confirmed his sinister forebodings, saying, —

"A state affair, it would seem, to judge from the proportions of this its *avant courier*. Do you intend to go?"

"I must," said Paolo; "I promised the ladies that I would. Don't you mean to accept?"

"Not I, indeed," returned Thornton; "I did not settle in Rome to be bothered with English dinner-parties. I wish you joy of it."

Paolo held his tongue, and the subject dropped for the present. After dinner he penned two lines of acceptance to leave at the Palazzo Morlacchi during his walk, and went out. Who should he meet on the threshold of the street door, rushing in like a mad bull, but Salvator, in the highest state of elation? The sanguine little painter had joyful tidings, which he longed to communicate, which he now did with sundry snatches of song, as the two friends, arm-in-arm, were proceeding down the Corso.

The glad tidings principally concerned Salvator's betrothed, Clelia. A few days back, she had been obliged to go a good distance beyond Porta del Popolo, to return some guipure she had had to mend. Clelia was very clever with her needle, could embroider, or restore the most delicate embroidery, a great resource to her, when her cameo-work slackened. The way was long, and the sun hot, so she sat herself down by the side of the road to rest. A lady on horseback, attended by a groom, came up at full gallop; and from the red jacket she wore, Clelia instantly identified her as a foreign marchioness, for whom this singular costume had won the nickname of the *Cardinalessa*. She was called besides, from being so constantly seen driving and riding, *Pentesilea*. Clelia accordingly looked at her with no small curiosity. The lady reined in her horse, and brought him up close to where Clelia was sitting.

"Are you ill?" asked the lady.

"No, madam, I thank you," replied Clelia, rising, "I am only resting myself."

"Sit down again," desired the lady; "are you unhappy?"

"Not in the least, madam, I am obliged to you," smilingly replied Clelia, who had remained standing.

"Did not you hear me tell you to sit down?" cried the lady, with a sudden burst of passion. Clelia complied. "Do you live by your work?" continued the stranger, in her former manner. Clelia answered in the affirmative.

"And what kind of work is it?"

"Cutting cameos; but when I have none to cut, I mend lace and embroider on muslin."

"Have you plenty of work just now?"

"Not much," hesitated Clelia.

"Well, then, come to Villa Torralba to-morrow at twelve, and you will find plenty of work there. Ask for the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos, — don't forget the name."

With this, the marchioness wheeled her horse round, and had set off in a gallop, when she suddenly pulled him up again. Clelia was full of admiration at the intelligence, almost divination, the fine animal showed in accommodating himself to the caprice of his mistress. "To make sure of getting access to me," called out the marchioness, "send this to me by one of my servants," and away she was like the wind.

Clelia rose to pick up the something the foreign lady had thrown at her. It was a ring with a large ruby surrounded by brilliants and evidently of great value. Clelia could scarcely believe her own eyes. "One of the fairies of the tale, who drop pearls and diamonds as they go," thought she. Her wisest plan was to take care of the precious deposit, so she slipped

it on one of her fingers, and clenching her hand to make sure of its not falling off, pursued her way. Not a wink of sleep had she that night, so keenly did she feel the weight of the trust reposed in her.

She went next morning to Villa Torralba, but found it no easy matter to penetrate to the presence of the marchioness. Not that there was any lack of male and female servants to do her errand, there were plenty of them about the grounds, on the staircase, in the lofty entrance hall; but all and each seemed quite regardless of what was passing around them; they had enough to do to mind their own business, and their business apparently was to do nothing. At last Clelia succeeded in catching hold of an elderly woman, on whom the sight of the talisman presented by the Roman girl produced some effect, and by whose means, after a little delay, she was introduced to the fairy.

Clelia was shown into a large room, where there were three large marble baths built into the wall. Two female attendants were busily engaged, one in washing, the other in drying and combing a multitude of lapdogs of all sizes, breeds, and colours, the majority of which were waiting for their turn of the tub with exemplary composure.

The Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos, in a morning *negligé*, extending even to her hair, hastily tucked behind her ears, and rather dishevelled, lay coiled like a snake, on a crimson velvet sofa, from which she could command a view of the ablutions going on, though more particularly engaged just then in addressing a beautiful spaniel, who, resting his forepaws on the edge of the lady's couch, was drinking out of the cup of rare China she was holding for him.

On entering the room, Clelia caught the marchioness's eye and curtsyed, but, receiving no sign of recognition, she remained standing at the door, waiting the lady's pleasure, thinking the while what a beautiful composition for a cameo there was in the *pose*, graceful in its indolence, of the exquisite little form, with its small hand, and tiny feet, playing at ease in the red and gold slippers, and the rich drapery formed by the ample cashmere dressing-gown floating round it.

The marchioness appeared to see nothing but the spaniel she was petting.

"Drink, Mannelito — my love, it will do you good; my poor Manuelito is quite feverish; Manuelito must get well, or he cannot have his bath," and the little animal, by way of answer, sniffed and wheezed, scraping and scratching to get up on the velvet sofa.

"What is your name?" inquired the lady, abruptly turning to Clelia.

"Clelia, madam."

"Beautiful, I like it. There is a great deal in a name, though people say not. Now guess mine. It is the same as that of one of your Roman heroines."

"Is it Cornelia?" asked Clelia. The other shook her head. "Virginia?"

"Yes, Virginia — how clever of you!" cried the marchioness in delight; "don't touch Manuelito, he will bite you."

"I am not afraid of him," replied Clelia. "Manuelito is not so savage as that, see," and she patted and stroked the spaniel, who, after swallowing his medicine, had gone sniffing about the stranger in a very friendly spirit.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the fairy; "Manuelito always flies at everybody but me. You must possess a charm. There are negroes at the Havana who are charmers."

"If I have any gift of that kind, I have never found it out before," said Clelia.

As if fatigued with the exertion she had made, the noble creole closed her eyes, then suddenly, as if recollecting something, opened them again: "Why did you bring me back my ring?"

"Why?" repeated Clelia; "because it was yours."

"Have you any idea of its value?" asked the lady.

"I think I have; most of our cameo-dealers are also dealers in precious stones, and in this way I have learned something of their worth."

"Well, what do you value it at?"

"About three hundred or four hundred scudi."

"Do you consider four hundred scudi a large sum?"

"Quite a fortune," was the reply.

"And you were not tempted to keep the ring?"

"Tempted? how do you mean? since it was not my own," said Clelia.

"You are an extraordinary girl," said the marchioness; "I liked you the very first moment I saw you, and I gave you the ring to try you," and she laughed merrily.

She seemed to enjoy the fun of her scheme of temptation, and that in so childish a manner that Clelia never even thought of taking offence, but contented herself with asking, —

"And now that you have tried me?"

"Now, I mean to make you my friend," was the prompt answer.

"You are very kind to think of such a thing," said modest, prudent Clelia; "but our stations in life are so different."

"Never mind that," interrupted the marchioness, "you will see: at all events, you must stay with me."

"I shall be very glad to do so, if I can be of any use to you, that is to say, if you give me some work, some occupation."

"I like your way of talking — you can come and talk to me, when I wish it," said the lady.

"That would be a very agreeable office," answered the Roman girl; "but if I am to eat your bread, I must do something more substantial to earn it than talk. Have you no lace to repair, no linen to put in order, iron, or something of that sort?"

The lady desired one of the attendants to call Pepita. Pepita, who was a considerable time in making her appearance — the watchword in the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos' household being, to take things easy — Pepita was a fat, elderly mulatto woman, with a peculiar big yellow turban on her head, and a rather prepossessing countenance. After a short consultation in Spanish with her mistress, yellow turban conducted Clelia to a small light closet not far from the bathroom, where Clelia saw mountains of linen of every variety, and all of which she was at liberty to look over and sort; in short, do with as she chose. These were the instructions vouchsafed to her by Pepita.

And thus Clelia was installed at Villa Torralba, where she spent her days, sewing, mending, cutting out, ironing, &c., to her heart's content, save when summoned to her mistress's presence, or when that lady, which was oftener the case, came and sat in the

closet to enjoy a chat. By express agreement, Clelia went home in the evenings.

A more kind, more generous, more eccentric patroness than the marchioness, it would have been difficult to find. She would carry chocolate and cakes to Clelia, make her constant presents, talk to her of her own sorrows — that is, about Manuelito's ailments — show herself to her in her diamonds and evening dresses, and now and then startle the girl with such questions as these, —

“Have you a lover?”

“Yes,” replied Clelia, blushing, “if by lover you mean a man to whom I am engaged to be married, as soon as we can afford it.”

“Is he handsome, black-eyed, black-haired?”

“No, indeed,” said Clelia, smiling; “he is little, light-haired, and has grey eyes.”

“You cannot love him then?”

“Indeed but I do,” affirmed the girl; “I love him as he is.”

“Is he rich?” inquired the marchioness.

“As poor as a rat, and I love him the more for that.”

“You are the oddest girl I ever saw,” quoth the lady, “to love a man because of his poverty.”

“Poverty has its charms for the poor,” answered Clelia; “it tells us of toil, self-denial, and suffering, and out of such things, springs sympathy.”

The marchioness mused a little.

“What is your lover?”

“He is a landscape painter,” said Clelia.

“Do you think he could paint scenes for a theatre?”

"That he could, and beautifully too," replied the Roman girl; "he is very clever."

"Well, then, I think I shall be able to employ him, I am going to have a private theatre here, and I shall want some one to paint the scenery. You must bring him here some day — I shall tell you when."

Such was the substance of Salvator's communication to Paolo; such the foundation, on which the lively imagination of the little fellow had already raised the edifice of Clelia's fortune and his own.

CHAPTER XIV.

Amphitryon.

TAKING into consideration that Mr. Jones was a stranger, and a rather formal one, it occurred to Paolo that he ought to accommodate himself to the humour of his host, and for once depart from the habitual simplicity of his costume. With this view he purchased a black satin neck-tie, and a pair of gloves of a hazel-nut colour; waiting with trepidation the moment for the display of his finery, and not without a lurking hope that something might yet come in the way of the proposed dinner. But the days passed quietly, and Saturday arrived without bringing him any counter-orders, and there was nothing for it but to dress and go.

The flutter of spirits he had felt on the morning of his first visit to Palazzo Morlacchi was a trifle compared to that he experienced on the present occasion. He was afraid of being too smart, of being too plain, of being too early, of being too late; in short, he was so miserable in his state of suspense, that it proved

quite a relief to plunge head-foremost into the thick of reality, by knocking at the door. The look of the unknown footman, who instantly answered the knock, was not encouraging; for it seemed to say that he needed not to have been so much on the alert for such a guest. A question then arose in Paolo's mind as to whether he ought to leave his hat in the ante-room, or carry it with him to the drawing-room. He remembered having heard the point discussed, but how it was settled he had not the least recollection. There was little time now for debating the *pro* and *con*, and he followed the footman, with his hat in his hand. To such as Paolo, a hat is a precious support in company; it is more than a standing point, it is a countenancer, almost a friend.

Paolo had that gift of quick-sightedness, which takes in at a glance the details as well as the whole of a *tableau vivant*; a most fatal gift to shy people, inasmuch as it makes them nervous in proportion to the clearness of their perception of the host of difficulties they have to steer clear of; whereas your man who can scarcely see beyond the tip of his nose, walks past friends and foes unawares, accosts three wrong ladies before reaching the lady of the house, and intrudes himself on her notice just when he ought to abide his time; and all this with an imperturbable self-satisfaction, due to his utter unconsciousness of the blunders he commits, and of the effect they produce on others.

There were only gentlemen in the room, six in number, comprising Mr. Jones, all in full array of white neck-cloths and gloves to match. This Paolo saw with perfect equanimity; it was just what he had anticipated; but his blood gave a turn, when he discovered that he was the only one who had a hat in his hand. Was he

to drop it there on the spot, or watch for a more favourable opportunity of ridding himself of the incumbrance? Better go up at once to the master of the house, and make his salaam. Not so easy. There were breakers ahead. Mr. Jones was leaning against the mantel-piece, his back to the door; and so engrossed by a paper he was holding towards an unknown gentleman on the other side of the fire-place, that to all appearance he had not heard Signor Mancini announced.

To force himself, so to say, upon the notice of his host, while evidently engaged in some deeply interesting subject — Paolo was far too discreet for that. The only course he could devise under the circumstances seemed that of moving up in Mr. Jones's direction, and awaiting his leisure. Just as Paolo was approaching him, Mr. Jones happened to turn round, saw the new comer, waved his hand to him by way of salutation, and resumed his former position and occupation. Paolo was sadly put out by this manœuvre; for, suddenly checked in his progress, and brought to a halt midway between the door and the fire-place, he felt extremely awkward, and at a loss what to do next.

A friend in need is a friend indeed, and such in this critical emergency did Count Fortiguerra prove to Paolo. The count bore down upon the young painter with all the majesty of a threedecker under a press of canvas, viz. with extended arms. Paolo felt thankful at heart for this timely succour, and received the count's gracious advances more warmly than he might otherwise have done. Count Fortiguerra professed to be most desirous of cultivating the acquaintance of a distinguished artist, an honour to his country. Only the day before his illustrious friend, Prince Torlonia, had

escorted him over his palace, and pointed out for his admiration Signor Mancini's beautiful fresco, a masterpiece in his opinion, and the count pleaded guilty to the weakness of believing himself to be a little of a connoisseur. He possessed a small gallery of his own, and should be proud and happy if Signor Mancini had time and good-will enough to humour a desire the count had, to add to his modest collection a production of Signor Mancini's brush.

The count was a loud talker at all times, and on this occasion he had his own reasons for wishing to be heard; well, the count's move, and rather obtrusive notice of Paolo, worked a great change in the young painter's position. Just as droplets on a pane of glass will converge towards a bigger drop, so had the chevalier, Mr. Piper, and the youthful Mr. Paddock, one after another, converged towards the point where the count and his *protégé* stood conspicuous, and formed a circle round them. They were in time to hear Paolo state his regret, that for the present he was so busy as to be unable to meet as he could wish the count's kind proposal. Even Mr. Jones and his companion, the Honourable Captain Paddock, doffed their dignity, and approached the other gentlemen.

Such was the posture of affairs, when the ladies came into the room, and rejoiced indeed was Lavinia, whose heart had been full of misgivings on a certain point, to perceive that her particular friend was receiving all proper attention. Nor could he fancy himself overlooked even in the bustle that ensued; he met, from both aunt and niece, with as cordial a welcome as he could wish! What, then, made him redden and look so out of countenance? The truth is, Miss Lavinia wore

that identical dress he had so strongly objected to on the first day of her sitting to him; and what, then, if she did? I fancy I hear the reader grumble forth she was one of a dinner party, and not going to have her portrait taken; what business was it of Paolo's how she dressed?

The reader is perfectly right, but is entreated to consider that the relater of a story is no more responsible for the whims of his *dramatis personæ*, than a photographer for the snub nose or squinting eyes of one of his sitters. The storyteller's duty is to record the impressions received by his personages, so as to allow of their characters being fully appreciated, but not to account for, nor yet to justify, their fancies. It is in order to serve the above purpose that we mention distinctly that the impression made on the Italian by Miss Jones's attire was anything but agreeable.

"Dinner is on the table." The official announcement sets the company all on their legs. Mr. Jones frowns significantly at Mrs. Jones, who looks hopelessly towards Lavinia. Paolo admires the dexterous ease and grace with which the young lady, by a few smiles and nods, assorts the couples, and regulates the order of march. The double doors, flung wide open, discover to the dazzled eye a vista of footmen, lights, flowers, glass, and mountains of silver.

Who first set foot in this land of promise? tell us, heavenly muse. Who but the count? *A tout seigneur, tout honneur*. The illustrious representative of one of the oldest families of Italy knows nothing of English customs, defies English customs, and asserts his right to precedence, by leading in Mrs. Jones with that dignified ease and grace of manners, which art can partly

imitate, but which nature exclusively gives as a right to the highborn. The Honourable Mrs. Paddock, on the arm of the master of the house, smiles significantly at the solecism in manners committed by the Roman, in making Mrs. Jones precede her guests. Minor guns follow, the Honourable Captain with Mrs. Piper, the chevalier and Miss Lavinia. The very small fry are left to take care of themselves.

Paolo avails himself of a favourable opportunity to drop his hat on a chair, and, directed by a graceful wave of Miss Lavinia's hand, quietly sits himself down between Mr. Piper and the youngster Paddock; just the seat he would have chosen for himself, though the position did not appear without some danger from his young neighbour, the ends of whose spotless cravat stick out so portentously, and withal look so stiff and sharp, as really to justify some alarm. But he is out of sight of Mrs. Piper, who is on the same side as himself, and though Miss Lavinia sits opposite, between the count and chevalier, it is in a place sufficiently out of his straight visual ray, to justify his seldom meeting her eye without any show of affected avoidance. Ungrateful wretch that he is! how little he surmises that he owes his present comfortable situation to the provident care of his fair pupil, who had been expressly forbidden to have a mere painter at her side, when there were counts, honourables, and chevaliers to be had. How many such delicate, exclusively feminine attentions are often thus lost upon men's gross perceptions!

Dull work at first, but it will become more lively by and by. Madeira circulates. Mr. Jones particularly requests the count's opinion of his Madeira. The noble

friend sips, and smacks his lips; sips again — must have another glass; buries his chin in his cravat for ten seconds, amid a general silence, then delivers a solemn fiat, that it is the very emperor of Madeiras. A little hubbub ensues; Captain Paddock gives in his most enthusiastic assent. Mrs. Paddock, on Mr. Jones pressing her to taste it, submits, but will not say a word. (Always a Mordecai at our gate.) Count Fortiguerra pompously relates what capital Madeira — indeed, half a century old — he had drunk at the table of his august connection, Don Pedro, the then Emperor of Brazil — it must have been as far back as 1826 or 1827 — at Rio Janeiro. The Fortiguerras, he loudly whispers to Miss Jones, are allied by the female side to the house of Braganza. It was the best Madeira he had drunk in his life, but it did not come up to this; no, it did not come up to this.

This puts Captain Paddock on his mettle: he recollects an entertainment given by the Duc d'Aumale — was it the Duc d'Aumale or the Prince de Joinville? — it was in the roadstead of St. Jean d'Ulloa. — The Captain must wait for a more propitious moment to finish his story. Mr. Jones cuts him short, by calling from one end of the table to the other, to say how, when, and owing to what lucky chain of circumstances, he had been able to secure three pipes of this precious wine from the cellar of H. R. H. the Duke of —, on the sad occasion of that exalted person's demise. Mr. Jones is extremely particular about his wine, he owns — price with him is a secondary consideration. A crust of bread, but a glass of good wine, is his motto. They are going to taste his *Château Margot* — his champagne — he is not partial to French growths, indeed to no-

thing French. (Hear, hear.) Give him old honest port and sherry, that's the drink for a man who is a man. He flatters himself he has as good of either as any one can boast of — he can answer for his wine; as for eatables, his friends must be indulgent. We are at Rome, you know.

Acting upon the impression that Roman meat is not meat, but a spurious imitation of the genuine English article, Mr. Jones apologizes for every succeeding dish in quite a touching way. Paolo feels full of retrospective pity for Lucullus and Vitellius, and such arrant bunglers in gastronomy who could live and die too, under the delusion that they had enjoyed tolerable suppers in Rome.

The recollection of his London purveyors depresses Mr. Jones — he calls for champagne. The liquid gold mantles and sparkles; what melancholy association can withstand that celestial potion? The machine is now fairly set a-going — no lack of the necessary fluid to keep it at full speed. The three big guns recommence firing with renewed vigour: the Honourable Captain is bombarding St. Jean d'Ulloa again; the count is scouring the Pampas among the Gauchos, throwing the lasso, hobnobbing with the Dictator Rosas and Manuelita, not forgetting the narrow escape he had of marrying that amiable lady. Mr. Jones is initiating Mrs. Paddock (a Russian by birth and in feeling) into the glories of the British constitution, and the part assigned in it to the aristocracy, which he incidentally and rather indignantly defends from the charge of exclusivism, showing, in point of fact, and with many illustrations to boot, that it is ever eager to open its ranks to, and assimilate to itself, the best men in the country, irrespective of their

starting point. Mr. Jones underlines the words by the marked emphasis he lays on them. That emphasis says, "Who knows but I may be one of them some day!"

What can be the mighty intelligence, that the chevalier is imparting in the meantime to Miss Lavinia in so subdued a tone, and to confirm which he appeals to the count? The count leaves the Holy Conclave, where he had just arrived, and into which he was introducing his listeners, to its fate; drops his deep bass into a stage whisper; and, after giving Miss Lavinia the desired explanations, adds a gentle hint, the purport of which must be that the matter ought to be kept as private as possible — otherwise, why should she say audibly enough for Paolo to catch her words, "that it would be quite safe with Signor Mancini"?

"No doubt," assents the count; whereupon the sweetest voice in creation informs Paolo *sotto voce* that "only think, a Lorenzo di Credi, two Lionello Spadas, and three Canaletti, are to be had for a trifling sum." Paolo feels grateful for this attempt of his fair pupil, not the first by several, to make him a party to the conversation; he has already noticed and admired her heroic efforts to divert from her aunt, and draw upon herself, the flow of Captain Paddock's confidences, who, twice baffled of his St. Jean d'Ulloa anecdote, in utter despair of obtaining a general hearing, has chosen Mrs. Jones as the recipient of all the particulars of the case. But Paolo, in spite of all his wish to be agreeable, cannot think one way and speak another; and as he thinks or rather knows by experience that similar bargains are usually traps for foreigners, he says so. An unacquiescing little shake of the head from Lavinia, a

spiteful glance from the chevalier — the count is too far away, at San Francisco, to hear Paolo's remark — is all he gets for his sincerity. Served him right. What necessity is there for always telling the truth? Nothing more uncourteous than the truth. Why the deuce cannot he agree with everybody, and let things go smoothly and pleasantly? Speech was granted to man as a means of being agreeable; therefore, truth is best at the bottom of her well.

Is the European horizon likely to continue cloudless, or are there any incipient signs of an impending storm? In plainer terms, is peace likely to continue or not? At the wisdom stage of convivial excitement, into which Mr. Jones has entered with the third course, these momentous questions invite his particular attention. He sees, he regrets to say, dark clouds gathering in the West. Things and names are revived somewhere, offensive to English feelings and notions; things and names which England neither can, nor must, nor will tolerate much longer. Sad as a prospect of war may appear, especially to men of capital, Great Britain has duties, imperative duties, and the sooner France gets a licking the better.

Royal Navy differs *toto cælo* from the views developed by Exchange. England has nothing to fear from the West, but everything to fear from the North. Have an eye to Herat, says the captain; there lies the vulnerable spot of Great Britain's armour. Herat is the key to India; we must have a care that Russia does not put it in her pocket.

Mr. Jones pooh-poohs the notion. Herat is safe enough. India! no fear there; no, no, the danger is not from the North. Must he back his opinion? Well,

not three months ago, at the lord mayor's dinner, a personage — he need not mention names — took him aside, and said to him confidentially, "Mr. Jones, men on 'Change ought to be warned in time: I see great chances of war; France must be humbled." Such were the very words of Lord Ballersdon. The Honourable Captain receives this statement with Homeric hilarity. Lord Ballersdon is a fool; he is in the pay of Russia, everybody knows. Ask Mr. Urksome. Must the captain say from whom he has positive, undoubted information of Russia's designs on India? If he must give an authority, he could give the Emperor Nicholas himself. Yes, Nicholas said to him, not six months ago, at Moscow, "Captain Paddock, had I twenty men like you, India would be mine in less than a twelvemonth." Clear enough, thinks Royal Navy; therefore he says, "Have an eye to Herat, beware of the North, bridle the North."

This salutary warning is roared to such a pitch, that it reaches the ear of the Russian lady of the Honourable Captain, who, more frankly than civilly, begs the West and her honoured lord and master to let the North alone, or the North may give them both a bear's hug. The captain, as red as a turkey-cock, has a retort cooled on his lips by the handing round of ices. With the dessert, Mrs. Piper introduces the Madiais; the moment is ill chosen, — nobody recollects or cares about the Madiais; the subject drops, and there is a sudden cessation of noise. Exhausted Mrs. Jones gives an appealing glance to Mrs. Paddock, and lets it seek the faces of the other ladies. A slight push back of Mrs. Paddock's chair. Mr. Jones, with the greatest alacrity, rises and opens the door; the ladies sweep

through. Paolo would fain follow them, but he guesses that he must not, as he observes that none of the other gentlemen do so, and that Amphitryon gravely resumes his seat.

The scene becomes more jovial. Mr. Jones, Captain Paddock, and the count hurl at each other big names, and momentous state secrets, as if for a wager. Paolo is wearied to death, and his head aches with the Babel-like confusion of tongues. Cheer up, young artist, there is a Mæcenas for you present. The count is in a patronizing mood, and Paolo Mancini is about to have the benefit of it. Pedigree declares that it is a disgrace to Rome that an artist of such transcendent merit as Signor Mancini should remain in the shade. Genius needs encouragement, and his young friend shall have such, if Count Fortiguerra has still any influence or interest. Paolo's name shall be mentioned in the proper quarters — the count will take care of that. His Holiness is a most discriminating judge and patron of Art; so is his Majesty the ex-King of Bavaria. Count Fortiguerra has his *entrées* with both — and — with humility he owns — they are so good as to consider his poor opinion worth having. His young friend may hope everything.

These and such like expressions are accompanied by winks, nods, and significant knittings of the brow, that savour more of the Robert Macaire than of the *atarvis edite regibus*. Paolo is perplexed; what does the man mean by all his nonsense and extraordinary grimaces? Is Padre Nobile making fun of him, or is he trying to take him in? Alas! Padre Nobile takes in nobody but himself. The fact is that the good wine has overheated the count's brain, and he is fast losing

sight of that nice boundary, which separates acting from caricature. That is why he overdoes both his patronizing and his familiarity. The chevalier nudges him, treads on his toes, suggests that it is high time to join the ladies. The count demurs, but at last makes a motion to that effect; another bumper, and the gentlemen adjourn to the drawing-room.

The ladies had been left too long alone, not to be a little out of sorts. Still, to all appearance, too much engrossed by the momentous topics of India and war to do much towards enlivening the social circle, Captain Paddock and Mr. Jones fell quickly into the background, and sought some comfortable sofa, or chair, there to ponder or to doze. The count himself, though brisk and talkative at most times, had just now curious intermittent fits of dimness, just like a revolving light, or, if you like it better, like a lamp that is going out. Even the chevalier seemed under the weight of a slight preoccupation, and either, while turning over the leaves of the music for Miss Lavinia, or singing a duet with her, kept one eye constantly on his noble associate. All these little circumstances combined to throw a damp on the evening, and to bring it to a close. Mrs. Paddock was the first to give the signal of retreat, and a general break up immediately followed. The count begged to be allowed to inquire if his carriage had arrived, and was then reminded by the chevalier that he had given orders that it was not to come. Mrs. Jones offered her carriage to the count; but he would not hear of the horses being put to at that hour of the night. He preferred a walk on the strength of the adage that *post cœnam deambulabis*; in fact, the dinner had lengthened out to such an hour, it might be reason-

ably considered as a supper. Another minute, and they were all gone; Paolo the last, but not the least relieved.

Count and chevalier, arm-in-arm, plodded heavily along; the shark and the pilot-fish. The one was in the meekest, the other in the most peevish of humours.

"Now, don't be stupid," expostulated the count; "what harm have I done?"

For all answer to this question, the little man shook off the hold of the big one, who, suddenly deprived of a friendly support, tottered away, exhibiting a strong aversion to the straight line.

"You see what you have done! put yourself in such a beastly state of intoxication as not to be able to walk steadily."

"Come, come," said the count, good-humouredly, placing his arm again within that of the chevalier; "the foundations are rather shaky, but this," with a tap on his forehead, "is fresh and clear. *Spiritus promptus est*; try me on any abstruse topic, metaphysical or mathematical, and you'll see."

"There's no trusting you," went on the chevalier; "really you are worse than a baby; the moment you see the bottle, farewell all earthly considerations — confound the wine!"

"Be quiet, or there is an end of our friendship, now and for ever," said the count, in great earnest, and stopping short. "Perfection is not to be found in human nature, you know. I have got my foible, the foible of Horace, of Cato, of Luther, of all great men. Rogues of my calibre, let me tell you, would be too dangerous if they had not their weakness. You have no idea of the expenditure of nervous fluid, the in-

venting and combining and relating those stories of mine, entailed upon me. It is most exhausting. Man is like a lamp, my dear boy; if you don't feed it, it goes out."

"And so it does if you replenish it too much."

"I positively deny your accusation; I always keep within decent limits. Mr. Jones and that captain were both much ahead of me, that they were."

"They can be so without danger," retorted the chevalier; "they have no part to perform like you."

"Sensibly observed," quoth the count, "though God alone knows whether they have or not. There are more actors in this world than you wot of. In fact, every one is, more or less. But never mind that, let us come to the point. I have a capital scheme in my head."

"Very well, we will let it rest till to-morrow," said the chevalier, carelessly.

"Not at all," insisted the count. "I hold to proving to you this very instant, that I am sober, and that you are an ungrateful little mummy. Yes, sir, while you are accusing and reviling me, I am racking my brains how to make your fortune."

"You are very good, and the foundation of which is to be—?" asked the chevalier.

"Miss Lavinia Jones, sir. She seems mightily pleased with you. Strike the iron while it is hot, and possess yourself of her hand and her money. There's my plan."

"And it speaks highly for your penetration," sneered the chevalier. "Why, a man must be as blind as a bat, not to see there is a flirtation going on be-

tween Miss Jones and Mancini; but you have only eyes for the bottle."

"Do you really mean it?" gasped the count, a little abashed. "Well, never mind; 'Faint heart never won fair lady.' Enter the lists all the same, and ten to one you come off the winner. Nothing young damsels dote upon half so much as little manikins they can carry in their pockets. I have seen many for the sake of such pigmies jilt Antinoüs-like figures such as Mancini and me. Women are so queer!"

"Queer indeed! However, let who will try the experiment in the present case, I certainly will not. It would break Amina's heart, and not for twenty Miss Lavinias would I cost her a tear. One may live by his wits, and still have feelings."

"Ha! feelings!" laughed the count; "you won't go far with that stumbling-block in your path. But so it is, as I said before: nobody is perfect; we all have our infirmity; yours is feelings — mine, the bottle. A great pity, though, such a plot as I had made. I am no novice in this sort of affairs. Did I ever tell you, how I got an heiress for a professional flute-player?"

"Scores of times," said the chevalier; "I know the story by heart."

"So much the better; you'll be able all the better to correct me if I blunder, and judge if I am sober. If I omit any the least circumstance, I'll allow you to be in the right. Well: it was at Naples, now thirty years ago. My flute-player, a poor, but sturdy fellow, was hard at work making love to this German young lady, a perfect scarecrow, but immensely rich; the lady still demurred. What was to be done? I arranged a duel. We went to the Cascine; not to the

Cascine, we were at Naples — I am a little excited, but I know what I am saying. Well, we went to Posilipo: two shots were exchanged; no bullets, of course, and at the second shot my man fell down dead!”

“And married afterwards?” laughed the chevalier.

“Not a doubt, for he turned out to be only badly wounded. All Florence swallowed the canard — all Naples, I mean; I am a little forgetful. The Dulcinea taken in as well as the rest. Her interest was excited. ‘Poor young man!’ she sighed. ‘About to die, and Heaven knows for what trifling cause.’ ‘It was no trifling cause, *gnädiges Fraülein*,’ said I, ‘which made me face death.’”

“Hallo!” cried the chevalier, “so you were the flute-player.”

“It was the flute-player, as I said. Now, don’t bewilder me. So I said: ‘My friend went out to make a boor pay dear for slandering a young lady.’ ‘What young lady?’ asked the Fraülein. ‘Cannot you guess?’ says I. Whiff; my German took fire like a lucifer-match. In due time the invalid made his appearance before her, his right arm in a sling. That was the finishing stroke. An arm in a sling for our sake, is irresistible. There was elopement, reconciliation, *justæ nuptiæ*, blessings, rejoicings.”

“Everything but the money-bags,” interrupted the chevalier; “the heiress turned out no heiress, and all the flute-player got for his trouble was the scarecrow. That’s the wind-up of the story, if I recollect right.”

“So it is, so it is,” roared the count. “Ha! ha! not a single Zwanziger — ha! ha! how I enjoyed the joke! What a memory he has, the sly little monkey.

But for his damned feelings, there is the making of a man in him, — that there is; but his feelings are in the way; and so is the bottle, and so is that stingy English grocer. I floored him though, and the other too. Bless me! what can be his name? my throat is dry as bricks, that it is—”

The count was so far gone by this time, that the chevalier could no longer manage him by himself, and had to ask a belated passenger for assistance — no sooner asked than given — to convey him home.

CHAPTER XV.

Miss Lavinia's Diary.

“DEAR LADY AUGUSTA;

“MEN are very ungracious, ungrateful animals. Show yourself particularly kind to any one of them, and see what you will get for your pains. This is said with due reverence, *apropos* of my Signor Domenichino. The day before yesterday we had a small dinner-party, and you would scarcely believe the trouble I took to have him invited. Uncle declared he would on no account have the *drawing-master*, as he insists on calling him, though he knows, as well as I do, that Signor Paolo is no more a drawing-master than I am; he does so merely to vex me. Well, uncle and I had nearly a quarrel about the dinner; he really made me indignant. I exhausted all my *effets de front à la Rachel*, and at last burned my vessels. If Signor Paolo was not to be of the party, no more would I — and of course I carried the day. And what were the thanks I received for all my efforts and good-will, from the hands of this

precious Domenichino? a cold, distant manner, either no answer at all, or a snappish one. However, he was no worse than the rest of the gentlemen, Count Fortiguerra excepted. I never saw such tiresome specimens of the stronger sex in my life. Mr. Jones was in one of his worst moods — boisterous, bombastic, boastful, and ended by — you can guess what? So did Captain Paddock. Do you know anything of the Paddocks of Paddock in Yorkshire? A good family, the Pipers say, but very poor; the captain is poor in spirit also. I am not sure that my favourite count himself was not a little too exhilarated, but he managed very well, and was not stupid like the other two. Though he has a little of the *bon vivant* about him, he is always the nobleman; besides, he is full of information of all kinds, animated with such ready wit, and not without a touch of real fun, always kept within bounds, though, by good taste. There is, in all that he says and does, that mixture of ease and dignity, in short that mysterious something, that you only find among the high-born. After all, he is not perfect; he is rather noisy, and talks too loud for my taste; but that's one of my prejudices. I hate loud speaking, and Italian habits and ways differ from ours. At all events I prefer his trumpet to the chevalier's cooing whisper. 'That infinitesimal dose' of a man was my neighbour, you must know. He always speaks to one as if he was making love. I hope Signor Mancini did not imagine that anything of that sort was going on between the chevalier and me. More than once I had a misgiving of this kind, and as one does not like to be placed in a ridiculous light, I repeated aloud what the little man had said, and tried to make the conversation less of a *tête-*

a-tête; but all in vain. It does not much matter what Domenichino or any one of these people thinks of me, but one thing I shall take care of in future, and that is not to be in such a hurry to be lavish of my sympathies.

* * * * *

"I may be as sympathizing as ever. I was in a fit of misanthropic humour when I wrote the above. I leave it as it is, as a punishment for having penned such contemptible nonsense. My accusation of ingratitude against Signor Paolo is absurd and odious — how could he ever dream that Mr. Jones objected to his company, or that he owed his invitation entirely to me? As for his moodiness, that is perfectly explained, and I think perfectly justified, by the circumstances. Considering the friendly footing we had been on for nearly two months (you know he was our only visitor), and the habits of intimacy that had grown up between us, Signor Paolo might think he had more right than any of the others to expect to take me in to dinner, and if he felt hurt or disappointed, it shows that it was not a matter of indifference to him. If there is anybody to blame in this matter, it is I myself, for having yielded to uncle's arrangement that I was to have the chevalier, and desert my old friend. I am sure I was well punished by having to listen to all the weak nonsense the little puppy inflicted on me. As to rank or riches, the chevalier may be, doubtless is, Paolo's superior; but there is more wit and originality in Signor Paolo's little finger, than in twenty such chevaliers. Now, I have eased my conscience by clearing Domenichino of the false charge I had brought against him, I have another and more serious cause for

uneasiness — one which preys on my good aunt's mind, and hurts her health. We can blind ourselves no longer to the fact, that uncle is fast taking to drinking. When we dine alone, and spend the evening at home, which, indeed, is generally the case, he gulps down tumbler after tumbler of brandy-and-water, till he gets excited, then drowsy; when we have company at home, or dine abroad, he gets regularly tipsy. The other evening he was disgracefully so. Aunt and I are quite at a loss what to do; he is so touchy and irritable we are afraid to say a word.

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"As I was to sit to-day for my picture, of course we had an influx of visitors. I put it down as a general rule, that whenever one wishes particularly to do some particular thing, somebody comes in your way. First the Pipers, then the Paddocks; it really seemed done on purpose. I was the more disposed to regret this *contretemps*, that I am rather inclined to like Mrs. Paddock; she is an odd enough specimen of womanhood, very masculine, looking much like a Russian grenadier; but she is straightforward, frank-spoken, and ever ready to do battle against everything and everybody that displeases her. But I could not like her at that exact moment. Well, it was past two when at last we could get out, aunt and I, for a drive; as for the sitting, I had given it up hours before. We drove first to Via Frattina, to explain to Signor Paolo why we had not gone to him. He said it was very lucky, as the count had been just calling on him, or, to use Signor Paolo's expression, had forced his way into his studio, by making such a tremendous noise at the door, as to excite alarm in the whole house. You are to understand

that whenever Domenichino expects us, he bolts the door of the atelier, and answers neither knock nor ring, but ours. Seeing him with his hat on, and evidently going out, aunt offered him a seat in the carriage, which was graciously accepted, and we had a beautiful drive to Villa Borghese.

"Domenichino was in a charming humour, and chirped on as merrily as the birds on the trees. The moment seemed a favourable one for me to risk a hint or two about a point, which you will consider what it really is, a very trifle, and yet, as you will see by and by, it has a relative importance. I must premise that Signor Mancini's dress at our dinner, without being quite shocking, was not what it ought to have been. Not a trace of a shirt-collar! he cannot bear them, he once told me they worry him so; black cravat; and then the gloves! light certainly, but brown; and every other man with straw coloured of course; to finish off, high thick shoes of leather, actual walking shoes.

"Now, though I might wish that he would conform more to general usages, still I cannot say that, with the exception of those horrid shoes, which spoil a well-shaped foot, I have any particular objection to either the brown gloves or the absence of the collar, generally ugly enough, Heaven knows. But not so Mr. Jones; and what specially affronted him was the chocolate coverings of Domenichino's hands. 'What does the fellow mean by daring to come here with brown gloves?' cried uncle, rising up from his doze, and adding other amenities that I need not repeat. It is true that uncle was more than half tipsy when he said this. and has not alluded to the subject since; nevertheless, I thought it would be a good thing to put Signor Paolo on his

guard as to what he ought to wear at parties, and thus prevent any such disagreeables for the future.

"With a view to this end, I asked him, not without a little circumlocution — very unnecessary, for he is as innocent and unsuspecting as a babe — well, I asked him where he bought his gloves? Anywhere, he purchased so few that he had no particular shop. I recommended him an excellent one, 'Especially,' said I, 'for gloves for parties,' adding cunningly, 'I mean for straw-coloured gloves.' He never went to parties, he said, and never wore any except black gloves.

"'But you came to our party, and more still, you wore brown and not black gloves.'

"'True,' said he, laughing, 'I made an exception for you.'

"'It was very amiable on your part,' said I. 'Cannot you go a little further, and have gloves like everybody else?'

"'If I may speak my mind,' he replied, 'I must confess that I object to them on principle.'

"'Oh! oh! où les principes vont-ils se nicher!'

laughed I.

"'Laugh, but listen to my reasoning,' answered he, smiling. 'Gloves, as I take it, are worn for the sake of neatness — to keep the hands clean, I mean. So far the custom is rational, and I accept it. Now black gloves, or, if you object to that tint as fraught with lugubrious associations, gloves of any other colour as well as black and straw, answer perfectly the purpose of cleanliness. From the moment you order me to wear any colour on the plea of show, or elegance, or fashion, you cease to be natural; and I have a right to tell you that I am not a man of show, or elegance, or fashion

— that I do not care for such things. I object to your particular colour.’

“‘You waste a great deal of ingenuity,’ said I, ‘on what is not worth the outlay. It were, methinks, far simpler to accept established customs, and to conform to them.’ He held up his finger in a playful threat, and answered, ‘Beware of what you say; the maxim you lay down has a more extended meaning than you wot of. In fact, it does nothing less than enthrone routine and abolish progress; for all progress, take it as you like, is but a deviation from established custom. According to what you have said, Galileo was wrong, and the Inquisition right.’

“‘Somehow or other men always get the better of a woman in argument. They have more sophistry at their command than we have. A ready answer failed me at the moment, but I was far from being either pleased or convinced. Not that he was wanting in politeness; on the contrary, I willingly allow, that he carried on the controversy with perfect good-humour, nay, gracefully, but I cannot forgive him for laying such stress upon trifles. Then again, I do not approve of his unsociableness; as though it was a mark of great superiority not to go to parties! How can a young man in his profession ever expect to get on, unless he makes himself known? and how can he manage that, if he does not go into the world? I must absolutely set to work and cure him of this morbid mood. Don’t misunderstand the interest I take in this matter. I interfere less for the sake of the artist than for that of art. Believe me, Signor Mancini is destined by nature to become a great painter, and I should for ever reproach myself, were I not to do all in my power to prevent

his hiding his genius under a bushel. One of these days, unless I am more mistaken than I ever was in my life, he will take a very high standing among his contemporaries.

"Another thing I cannot pardon Domenichino, is his prejudice against the count. It is both unjust and impolitic. The count is a friend not to be despised: he knows the Pope, the King of Bavaria, and all the nobility; he is very rich, a connoisseur in painting, and very well inclined towards Signor Paolo. But no! Signor Paolo speaks lightly of him, treats him with the utmost indifference, and protests that he will have none of his patronage. Do you know what came into my mind? That Signor Paolo dislikes the count for being a count. Signor Paolo is a red-hot radical. Mr. Cobden is milk-and-water in comparison. Never was such disdain as Domenichino's for rank and titles. I remember very well the disparaging way in which he once spoke to me of a certain foreign prince — not foreign, he is a Neapolitan, I believe; at all events, Italian — the prince of that English equipage I wrote to you about. I hope, at all events, my Orson was not rude to the count this morning; if he was, he shall have a nice scolding the first time I see him. The count and chevalier take tea with us this evening, and I shall hear what passed this morning in the atelier.

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"There is no end to the surprises this man gives one. Can you believe that he painted a fresco in Palazzo Torlonia, the fresco, in fact, that is the cornerstone of his reputation — the count calls it a perfect gem — and that he has never said a word about it? However, this is not my great piece of news; my dear,

I might give you leave to guess a thousand times, and you would be just as far off from the truth as ever. Now own you would never imagine that Signor Domenichino might ride in his own carriage, if he chose. But the fact is so. It is quite a romance. I had the whole story from Count Fortiguerra. Paolo is the only near relative, as it seems — a great-nephew, if I don't blunder — of a high dignitary of the Church — the count did not tell me the name; but this great-uncle is either a cardinal, or a bishop going to be a cardinal, a very old, very rich, and very influential man. Well, this bishop, or cardinal, for some reason or other, was on bad terms with the family of Signor Mancini — with his father, I believe. It seems that, at the demise of this gentleman, the cardinal made overtures of friendship to Signor Paolo, even went so far as to offer to name him as heir to all his property, on certain conditions, quite honourable conditions; and that this hot-headed youth, this *testa matta*, as the count calls Signor Mancini — he was but a lad at the time — declined the proposal. *Testa matta* as much as you like; we need not be very much afraid of meeting many such. A man must have a deal of the hero in him, who can thus spurn a fortune, and prefer to toil for his daily bread. For my part, I must say, that however foolish the motives which prompted the act may have been, the act in itself is noble and grand.

“My first thought and question after hearing this tale, was whether there were no means of bringing about a reconciliation between uncle and nephew. The count says, perhaps there may be — he will endeavour to make himself more master of the case. He foresees difficulties in a certain quarter, which, however, he

thinks, might be surmounted. He is personally acquainted with the great man in question, though not on intimate terms. Count Fortiguerra hopes to give us more definite information to-morrow, when he takes us to Palazzo Torlonia to see Signor Paolo's fresco. Aunt is really more enthusiastic than even I am about our painter. How happy I should be, if, through our instrumentality, this interesting young man could be restored to that station of life to which he was born! Good-by until to-morrow.

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"I shall not attempt to describe the fresco — you would think I was exaggerating, if I were to tell you the impression it has made on me. I will only say this, that the figures of Diana and Endymion are in the style of the best ancient masters. The foreshortening is really astonishing. The count said, the artist seems to have hunted for some of the most difficult problems of art, for the pleasure of showing how easily he could solve them. And please to mark that this noble production is the work of a young man of two-and-twenty. Now, I shall not tease you with any more of my raptures. Pictures are never valued from description.

"The count brought us excellent news. A little good-will and a little money will easily remove, at least as far as he can see, the obstacles in the way of a speedy and entire reconciliation between the belligerents. The count advises, first, that Signor Paolo should make some small advance, say, write a few lines to a friend, expressive of his respect for his illustrious relation — in short, do something that might efface old unpleasant impressions, and show his good-will; se-

condly, that some small sum should be given to propitiate a certain confidential servant, whose influence is paramount with this clerical dignitary. It seems that all the princes of the Church, even the Pope sometimes, have a confidential follower, to whose advice they listen and attend in most matters. The count mentioned a certain barber, called "Gaetanino," who was all-powerful during the reign of one of the Popes, I forget which. However, whether this be true or not, our dignitary has a favourite domestic, and this favourite can and must be bribed.

"The count professed that he liked plain dealings, and that he always called things by their right names; he said it was for us to consider, whether there were not cases, in which the giving of a bribe was justifiable, and to decide whether this of Signor Paolo's was not one. As for himself, he avowed he had no scruples about the matter, always keeping in view the righteous and lawful end to be gained.

"Aunt and I hesitated a little, but we soon came to the conclusion that there could be no harm, where a man of the count's years and high position saw none. The count added that, but for his wish not to take a step in this affair without our full concurrence and approval, he would not have mentioned this paltry matter of money, which, of course, was exclusively his business. This arrangement we strenuously opposed; and after a long and hard contest, we only carried our point by protesting that we, and not the count, were Signor Mancini's intimate friends. We were so afraid of the count's playing us some generous trick, that we insisted on his accompanying us home, and actually pocketing the money at once, which he reluctantly did.

He would only take a hundred scudi to begin with — if more were required, he promised to inform us. You cannot think with what pleasure aunt gave the sum. It will be in the hands for which it is destined, by to-morrow morning; and the count also volunteered — he is the most obliging of mortals — to sound Signor Paolo, with reference to the little show of good-will that would be necessary on his part. Everything is lost, thought I, if the count venture into those unknown regions; so I hastened to say, that he had already trouble enough on his hands, and that I would take this part of the negotiation on myself. Plenty of thorns and briars I shall have to force my way through, but I shall win the day.

“The count’s behaviour throughout this affair has been admirable; he has proved himself a man of wise counsels, and of exalted feelings. A father could not have shown more ardour in the cause of a son, than he has done in that of Signor Paolo, though God knows, he has had small encouragement to be kind; for Domenichino is a very icicle to him. But there will and must come a thaw towards this good-natured man.

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“Domenichino did not call yesterday, as I anticipated he would, so I sent him a note early this morning, and I am expecting him every moment. I begin to realize some of the difficulties of my undertaking. I am full of trepidations and misgivings, instead of the hopes and confidence of yesterday. That affair of the bribe troubles me; the more I think of it, the less can I reconcile myself to it. I see now, that what is wrong in itself, cannot change its nature, and become right, because the end proposed is good. My heart flutters

as if I had committed some bad action. The life of comparative seclusion I lead, is neither advantageous for body nor mind. This young man's fate is becoming a sort of monomania with me. I can think of nobody and nothing else; I long to be done with him and this wild scheme. Why does it happen that Count Fortiguerra is in mourning, and that none of these princes or marquises open their salons? In little more than two months we shall have the Carnival. I really shall be so glad to have parties, balls, anything that will drive this painter and his affairs out of my head. I want to plunge head foremost into an ocean of gaiety, and be my former self again, admired, courted, floating in the dance, mixing in crowds, a belle among belles. Hark! I hear his step! what a goose I am to tremble so!

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"Oh! my dear friend, what have I done? Have I positively and irretrievably engaged myself to this young Italian? Have I been delirious? Am I awake, or am I dreaming? How came this about? It is more than I can explain in my present disordered state. I feel feverish. As soon as I can think clearly, I will try to tell you all I know about this matter. Pity me, for I am indeed unhappy — no, not unhappy — but utterly bewildered.

"LAVINIA."

CHAPTER XVI.

Lugete Veneres.

It is quite against the grain, that, just at its acme of interest, we break off Miss Lavinia's diary, and thus keep the reader on the rack — for we modestly take it for granted, that we have worked him or her up to a pitch of frantic curiosity to know the issue of our heroine's adventure. But we have at this minute a pressing call on all our sympathies, and one which admits of no dallying with it. Let any one possessed of feeling be the judge.

Confusion, dismay, consternation, reign supreme at Villa Torralba. Manuelito — *Lugete Veneres Cupidinesque* — Manuelito is no more! My lady has been up all night; so has Pepita, so has Clelia, so has the entire household — one and all, comforting and ministering to the interesting invalid. Nothing has availed. *Mors æquo pulsat pede, &c.* At a quarter to six in the morning, Manuelito breathed his last sigh in the arms of his inconsolable mistress.

But who is Manuelito? some reader with a short memory will perhaps ask. Manuelito is — or rather, alas! *was* — the paragon of spaniels — the marchioness's favourite dog, the dear pet that was ailing on the day of Clelia's first introduction to the villa — Manuelito! the delight of mankind, the pride of dogkind! *Lugete Veneres.*

My lady is distraught with grief. My lady is heart-broken. My lady is in fits; gentle violence has to be used to prevent her from leaving her couch and rushing into the adjoining room, where the deceased is lying in

state. Let her see him once more, embrace him once more! "No, no, it would kill you, señora," weeps the faithful Pepita. "It would kill you," repeat all the attendants in chorus. It is a scene to break even a heart of stone in twain. Eau de Cologne, eau de Melisse, sal volatile, elixirs, balsamic vinegars, wines, liqueurs, soups, chocolate, are employed, but without success. My lady grows worse and worse. Messengers by this time are galloping on the road to Rome, in search of members of the faculty of medicine.

"Oh! be composed, señora," entreats yellow-turbaned Pepita, deluged in tears; "collect yourself, for his sake. Think how wretched poor Manuelito would be, if he could see you in this state, — oh, dear!" The hint was suggestive; who can tell, if Manuelito be not watching her from some canine Elysium! A new spirit breathes in her; she rises; her women, in alarm, crowd round her. No cause for uneasiness; her ladyship will be composed — is composed. "Your arm, Pepita; your arm, Clelia." My lady descends to the pleasure grounds of the villa, in search of a proper resting-place for the remains of her darling. The garden unluckily teems with recollections of the dear defunct. Not here — nor there — nor yet farther off, — ah! here, under the shadow of the lime-trees. Physician after physician arrive in due order, and find their expected patient skipping along from garden alley to garden alley, smoking a cigarito. They shrug their shoulders, pocket their fees, and depart.

Nor shall Manuelito be buried like a — my lady was going to say, like a dog, but refrained in time. Due honours shall be paid to his memory. All Manuelito's canine acquaintances shall attend his funeral.

Quick — send hither my lady's secretary. Letters announcing the melancholy event are forthwith to be written to my lady's friends, with a request to those who have dogs to send them to Villa Torralba on the morrow at twelve o'clock, to join the funeral *cortége* of the deceased Manuelito. A monument shall be erected over his grave with his beloved image at the top thereof. Haste for a modeller to model the dear form; a sculptor to consign its beauties to marble; a painter to picture his likeness in glowing colours.

No — no! let no one stir, — it is not fit that such delicate commissions be intrusted to mercenary hands. The marchioness decides that it is an act of duty on her part, to go on these errands herself. Bring round the phaeton with the piebald ponies. Away she drives, swift as lightning.

It was far in the afternoon when the fair charioteer reappeared at the villa. She returned accompanied by a painter, a sculptor, and a modeller. A heap of black crape helped to load the light carriage. A score of guests invited to dinner were waiting her ladyship's arrival. Who in such an emergency could think of dinner guests? Everybody had forgotten them, excepting, fortunately for them, the cook. My lady apologizes gracefully enough, and with streaming eyes recounts her misfortune, becomes excited with her own words, and, forgetting the cause in her excitement, ends by being the life of her party.

On the following morning, an impressive and touching ceremony saddened the precincts of Villa Torralba. Fifty-seven dogs, exclusive of those of the marchioness, seventeen in number — in all, seventy-four dogs of all sizes, breeds, and colours, all enveloped in black crape,

and attended by the whole household, dressed in full mourning — accompanied the body of Manuelito to his last kennel. Pepita, and Hieronimo, the old Mayor-domo, acted as chief mourners in the absence of her ladyship; who intended to have headed the procession herself, nay, was actually on the road to do so, but — fainted away in the attempt. Human fortitude has its limits. Pepita and Hieronimo with their own hands laid all that remained of Manuelito in the carefully prepared grave; on the dead spaniel they placed his red velvet collar, his gilded muzzle, the silver dish with his name engraved on it, out of which he had eaten so many dainty meals, his napkin, his — but let us draw a veil over this part of the scene. Why dwell on such distressing particulars?

The demeanour of the canine brotherhood was all that the bereaved lady could have desired — a just measure of feeling repressed by decorum. The most deeply affected were naturally Manuelito's messmates: so much so that at the moment when the earth was being thrown into the grave, they became nearly unmanageable — struggling to escape so sad a sight. But they had yet one more mark of respect to show; it was written down in the programme, and no eye but was moist when Manuelito's comrades were induced to give a threefold bark — a last farewell, and all was over.

No, all was not over; the dog guests had to partake of a splendid repast, expressly prepared for them. After so much emotion, they must stand in need of refreshment. The marchioness presided with her usual grace at this funeral feast, with what heart may be easier imagined than described. Another half-hour,

and Villa Torralba had resumed its usual every-day appearance. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

In the course of the afternoon, the noble creole, who had made it a point of honour not to stir from home on such a day, finding her seclusion probably rather wearisome, went to the laundry to indulge in a chat with Clelia, a circumstance, by the by, which had happened but rarely of late.

The marchioness had so far recovered from the shock of her spaniel's death, or else mastered her grief so well, as not to make any even the slightest mention or allusion to her sad bereavement; on the contrary, she touched on none but light and genial topics, dwelling much upon the accomplishments of the Prince of Rocca Ginestra, one of her guests on the evening before. What a fine horseman he was! what a capital whip! and, oh, what a magnificent tenor voice he had! Did Clelia know the Prince of Rocca Ginestra? Clelia had no acquaintance with princes, but she knew the prince by sight.

Says my lady, "If he could only be prevailed on to join her amateur opera company, what an accession of talent he would bring to it! A host in himself! By the by, the theatre is nearly finished; where is the scene-painter Clelia had recommended and begged her to employ?" Clelia answered for his appearance on the morrow, if such should be her ladyship's pleasure. Clelia had not dared to broach the subject during the late circumstances at the villa.

"What cannot be cured must be endured, my good girl," observes my lady, philosophically, shaking her pretty head to signify the shaking off the weight of her grief. "Bring your painter with you to-morrow

morning; I am curious to see this sweetheart of yours."

"My betrothed! your ladyship means," said Clelia, with a blush.

"Dear me, child, how you blush!" laughed the marchioness; "betrothed, or sweetheart, where is the difference?"

The result of this conversation was, that by nine o'clock of the next day, Clelia and Salvator were briskly trotting out of the Porta del Popolo, on their way to Villa Torralba; Clelia giving Salvator a detailed account of all the particulars above related, as a key to his new patroness's character; Salvator listening in mute amazement, save now and then for an irresistible burst of laughter, or some irresistibly appropriate quotation from one of his dear librettos. The day was lovely, the air bracing; not a tree but birds twittered on it, not a patch of grass but swarmed with blackbirds. The lovers had not met for a week, and were now going on an errand full of happy promise for them. What wonder if they were in high spirits, or that the narrative, instead of flowing on steadily, proceeded by fits and starts! Their rather quick pace, and the exertion of speaking at the same time, had heightened Clelia's colour. The most skilful hair-dresser or lady's-maid could not have arranged her rich dark curls, and the black veil thrown over her head, to greater advantage than the morning breeze had done; in short, she looked so pretty in her neat though very faded cotton gown and worn-out mantle, that Salvator was quite excusable, if in his admiration of the speaker he occasionally lost the thread of her story, and had to pray of her to begin afresh.

The little man himself, in his big white cravat, enormous shirt-collar, and complete black suit (Paolo's best) dangling over his heels, worn or rather carried with a mixture of natural comicality and assumed gravity, looked so pre-eminently ludicrous, that Clelia could not help now and then interrupting herself to say, with a ringing laugh, —

"Oh! my poor Salvator, what a figure you have made of yourself!"

At which Salvator would stop short, take all the survey he could of his person, and answer gravely, —

"The tails of my coat are rather too long, are they? Better sin by excess than by deficiency, Clelia, eh? Altogether I am sure that I look respectable, parliamentary. You'll see I shall make an impression on my lady, I shall."

A very ridiculous impression, Clelia fears.

"Would that it might be so," says Salvator, "for then my success will be assured. He who amuses is always welcome, don't you see?"

Clelia's account of the señora being at last finished, the little painter gave his opinion as to the case; it was clear, exactly such a one as the libretto described in pointed language: *Che sia forse ossessa o matta: Mi da molto a sospettar*. In other words, that the Señora Marchesa was cracked. Clelia did not agree with him; the marchioness was in her right senses, and good enough too, but she had whims and fancies, like all great folks, who had plenty of money, and too much leisure. Clelia had had some experience of such people while she was with Bianchini, the celebrated cameoist. As soon as they had chosen one cameo, they thought they preferred another, and when the other was sent,

their rage for cameos was over, and they wanted something else.

"As far as I can judge," wound up Clelia, in her wisdom, "it is the difficulty of getting at a certain object, which whets our desire for its possession; and when it also demands any exertion of our own for its attainment, then its value and our pleasure are enhanced when we get it at last. But those who have only to wish in order to have, experience no satisfaction in winning that, to reach which they have not had to use spur or whip; consequently, they care for nothing in particular, and theirs are only whims, not wishes."

"Just so," assented Salvator. "For instance — but first permit me to tell you that your mantle is changing its colour, turning from black to red —"

"It is not," protested Clelia.

"And," went on Salvator, "for the last six months has been growing thinner and thinner; and just for the last six months I have had the wish in my heart to give you a new one."

"There is nothing the matter with it," put in Clelia; "nothing that I could not set to rights, if I had a little time to myself."

"My opinion is diametrically opposed to yours," calmly announced the little man. "A new one you shall have; but now let me go on, will you? I was then going to say that, for instance, the amount of pleasure I have had and have, in hoarding my paoli one by one, towards the purchase of this cloak, or whatever you call it, and in figuring to myself your pretty look on receiving it, is quite incredible, I assure you. Now, if I had at all times twenty, or even ten, scudi

at my command, all the pleasure I have had in trying to save up two scudi for you would have been lost, would it not?"

"And what you are pleased to talk of as my pretty look on receiving it, wouldn't have been so pretty as it will be — but, no, you want the money yourself, for really you are out at elbows, my poor Salvator."

"Not so bad, not so bad, my dear; my black velvet suit only needs a little tailoring to be as good as new."

"And your linen is in such a lamentable state; you have scarcely enough for a change; and your stockings — dreadful!"

"As to stockings, I contemplate a radical reform in that respect. I consider stockings rather as an article of luxury than —. Bless me! two blackbirds, I declare." Salvator could not see a blackbird without being frightfully excited.

"Pity you haven't a grain of salt in your pocket," laughed Clelia.

"*Proh pudor!*" remonstrated Salvator. "What was I about to say? something beautiful and highly philosophical, I know."

"About stockings, or blackbirds?" suggested the girl.

"About saucy lasses, for whom nothing is sacred, not even white cravats, and parliamentary array — kuckerikoo!"

"Don't be foolish, and make haste."

"More easily said than done," remarked Salvator, piteously; "how can I make haste with this confounded appendage I have to drag after me?" Paolo's trousers

had been tucked up in a hurry to fit Salvator's little limbs, and now the fastening of the left leg had given way, and a good twelve inches was revelling in the dust under his foot, and tripping him up at every step.

"Holy patience!" pouted Clelia, "how awkward these men are!" and kneeling down on one knee, she managed to turn up the obnoxious surplus of cloth, and to fasten it inside with pins.

"You are the handiest, nicest, kindest, most blessed little wife, that ever fell to the lot of a harum-scarum monkey. I must give you a kiss for your pains."

"Be quiet," cried Clelia; "don't you see that there are people at the gate?"

"I see two horses, which are not likely to tell tales," said Salvator.

"And a man close to them, perhaps my lady's groom. Make haste; if my lady goes out without seeing you, God knows when you will have another chance."

Had not the fear of missing my lady interfered with Clelia's usual clear sight, she might have discovered at a glance, as she passed through the gate, that the person in charge of the horses was not one belonging to the marchioness's establishment, and that on both horses were men's saddles. As to Salvator, he was a poor observer at all times, and a poorer one than ever at this moment, when he conceived his fortune was at stake.

Clelia left him at the foot of the marble stairs, while she hastened in search of her mistress. The señora was nowhere to be found in the house. Pepita had not seen her for the last hour. Clelia, in a great

flutter of spirits, rushed down by a back stair, going straight to Manuelito's tomb. But no marchioness was there. Clelia made the tour of the grounds, and was going to give up the chase in despair, when she bethought herself of the shooting gallery, where the marchioness often amused herself with practising at a mark. Clelia made for the shooting gallery. It was built along the wall, at the bottom of the garden behind the house.

The door was ajar; Clelia peeped in, saw her ladyship talking with a strange gentleman, and drew back hastily. A lioness surprised in her den could not have looked fiercer than did the marchioness, when she rushed after Clelia.

"What impertinence is this?" she asked, in a voice of thunder, her eyes emitting sparks of fire. "How dare you intrude on me?"

Poor Clelia was more dead than alive: she humbly begged pardon; she had come to say, that the scene-painter was waiting her ladyship's commands.

"Confound you, and your scene-painter," stormed my lady; "begone both of you; I don't want him, or anybody — begone."

The girl had not waited for the second "begone" to take flight.

Salvator's face lengthened considerably on hearing of the untoward change of mind, which had knocked down the edifice of his future grandeur. He expressed his firm conviction notwithstanding, that if my lady had seen him, he would have made an impression which would have given another turn to the matter. As it was, however, he owned that he could devise nothing better to do than to take himself away, and since

Signora Penteseilea had not done things by half, but had included Clelia in his disgrace, or him in hers, as the case might be, had not Clelia better depart with him, and they might look at blackbirds at their leisure? What did she think?

Clelia's first impulse was to go, but she resisted it, and, upon second thoughts, determined to remain. The señora was quick and fanciful, but she was also kindly, and there were great chances of her repenting of her passion, or, more likely still, forgetting it altogether, and requiring Clelia's services again as if nothing had happened. Salvator, therefore, had to make his exit alone, which he did, humming *sotto voce* an operatic air, most appropriate to the circumstances, to the effect that —

“ Il Pascià poter di Bacco,
Colle code dentro il sacco,
E strappandosi i mustacchi,
Alza i tacchi e sene va.”

Clelia, on her part, glided away quietly to the room where she usually sat, and began to work as well as the state of her trembling fingers would permit.

Certainly not more than half an hour had elapsed, before she received a hasty summons to the presence of the marchioness. Clelia was not slow to obey, following Pepita who had brought her the message. She was led to the spot, where lay Manuelito's mortal remains. There, seated on a bench, under a lime-tree, Clelia found her mistress. The lady, looking rather confused, it must be owned, asked —

“Well, where is the scene-painter?”

Clelia, surprised at this unexpected question, answered timidly that the scene-painter was gone.

"Gone!" exclaimed my lady, starting up and stamping her foot. "Is every one here gone crazy, or is there a conspiracy to make me so? I ask for a scene-painter — he comes — I am ready to receive him, and then I am told he is gone. Ah! everything goes wrong since I lost my Manuelito," and she burst into a passionate fit of tears.

"Don't, pray don't, señora," entreated Clelia, distressed. "I'll go, and bring the painter back this minute," and she was hurrying away.

"Where, in the name of wonder, is the girl going?" cried the lady. "Cannot you understand that you will never overtake him if you go on foot? Pepita, have a carriage ready this very instant, and go with the girl. Make hastel!"

The carriage was soon ready, and Clelia and Pepita started in pursuit of Salvator. They found him at no great distance from the villa, squatted on a stone, and watching with intense interest the gambols of some blackbirds, on a patch of grass bordering the road. To explain the nature of their errand, to take him into the carriage, and bring him back in triumph to the villa, was the affair but of a few minutes. Salvator evinced no greater surprise at this new turn of the wheel of his fortunes, than that conveyed by his giving forth with the greatest zest the two hackneyed lines from the *Barbiere*: —

"Donne, Donne eterni Dei,
Chi v'arriva a indovinar?"

Clelia's prophecy was realized in full. The impression produced by her little friend on the señora was one of unbounded hilarity. Do what she would to

control herself, the struggle was vain; she succumbed to fit after fit of hearty laughter. Salvator stood the ordeal beautifully; he did not so much as wink, but seemed quite absorbed in an artistic survey of the grounds. At last, her paroxysms having abated, the marchioness was able to speak.

"I understand that you are a scene-painter," she began.

"I beg your ladyship's pardon, I am a landscape painter, in the style of Salvator Rosa, but I do paint scenes occasionally."

"In what theatre have you been employed in that capacity?"

"In none," said Salvator, "but I have painted scenery for private theatricals."

"That alters the case," quoth my lady. "I want a first-rate scene-painter — some one who knows all about it."

"I do know all about it," asserted Salvator.

"But how can I be sure that you do?"

"Try me," was the laconic reply.

"Well, I will: it is now eleven o'clock; I give you till six to produce a specimen of your skill."

"I ask no more," said Salvator, "that is, if all requisite materials are ready."

"Nothing is ready," replied the noble creole. "Take the carriage, go to town, and get all you require."

"A canvas of the proper size," objected Salvator, "requires time to be prepared and stretched."

"Ah! but time is the only thing I cannot afford. Can you paint only on canvas?"

"I can paint on *anything*," emphasized Salvator.

"A whitewashed wall?" interrogated she.

"Perfectly," he answered.

"Then follow me," and she led the way to the shooting gallery, in which that part of the wall behind the target had been recently whitewashed. Pointing to the space, the marchioness said, "There, then, is your canvas; make haste, and remember that you are to paint so as to produce a good effect from a distance, but from near it must look all blotches and patches."

Salvator muttered something irreverent about carrying bats to Athens, and bowed himself out of his patroness's presence. We need not follow him to Rome, nor yet back to the shooting-gallery, though we may imagine him there with towels pinned all over him to protect Paolo's black suit, painting with a will, and singing scraps from manifold librettos. To make a long story short, we will only say that before the appointed hour, Salvator had achieved a page of tropical vegetation — mark this stroke of policy, if you please — as was sure to find its way to the heart of any native of the torrid zone. Palm and banana trees in the foreground, the ruins of a temple half choked by enormous cactuses in the middle, and on the horizon a perfect *torrisco*, or jungle of cedars, — these were the main features of this remarkable composition; to deepen the local colouring, the painter had generously sprinkled about red flowers of the size of melons, and a moderate allowance of monkeys and variegated parrots.

And did not her ladyship clap her hands, and scream with delight, at this delineation of the dear familiar trees, and monkeys, and parrots, and summon the whole household to come and admire it? And did not her ladyship next grow frightfully agitated at the recollection of her country, and be on the very point

of crying her beautiful eyes out, only catching sight in time of Salvator swaddled in towels, almost die of laughing instead? And when on close inspection, her ideal of horrible patches and blotches was discovered in plenty, what transports could exceed my lady's transports? Was there ever a painter to equal *her* little painter?

And on dinner being announced, who but the small man must sit opposite to the great lady, with his betrothed by his side, and be feasted with choicest dainties and choicest wines, — just as if his next task were to get a fit of tipsiness, or of apoplexy?

Salvator ate and drank like one who had breakfasted on a halfpenny roll at eight in the morning, and cracked jokes and quoted from the libretto with the hearty zest of one whose natural flow of spirits, ready at all times, is quickened by success, and the prospect of a fortune. The marchioness protested over and over again that a more amusing fellow did not exist in creation.

Clelia spoke little; probably she was not the least happy of the three. And so, it was settled, *inter pocula*, that on the morrow the newly appointed scene-painter in ordinary to her ladyship should enter on his functions. On their road to their respective homes, Salvator rather triumphantly asked Clelia, —

“Now, was I right or not when I told you, that I needed only to be seen to make a favourable impression on the *señora*?”

CHAPTER XVII.

Miss Lavinia's Diary.

"DEAR LADY AUGUSTA,

"I BEGIN to feel composed enough to give you a tolerably intelligible account of what has passed. Twenty four hours of reflection, united to aunt's kindly advice and tenderness, have calmed the first tumult of my feelings. I now clearly see my position, and honestly accept it; and to be quite frank with you, I am reconciled to it. In my eagerness to please, in my zeal to serve, I authorized hopes, which I have not the heart to disappoint. At all events, I did not do so when I ought; indeed, a concourse of strange circumstances had thrown me so completely off my guard, that when those hopes clothed themselves with words and asserted their existence, all my presence of mind deserted me; I could find nothing to say but what passion might fairly construe into acquiescence. Do not judge me harshly — do not call me silly — he had shown himself so noble! he was so tender, so respectful! and so utterly wretched! he — but I promised you a clear explanation, and I am giving you instead enigmas. Have patience with me; my mind is still so ill at rest, that I cannot help my thoughts running off into all sorts of speculations.

"The conclusion of my last letter to you — I don't mean the hasty postscript, but what went before, though I cannot recall the exact phrase — must have shown you the state I was in, when Signor Paolo was announced. I really was, without exaggeration, half distracted. Reflecting since on my agitation, so dispro-

portioned to the cause, so little natural also in one of my buoyant spirits, I cannot help imagining that a mysterious presentiment of some impending decisive event must have oppressed me. Probably he saw at the first glance that I was disturbed, for he asked at once if I were ill, or if anything had happened to distress me. In my perplexity I caught at this opening to say, 'Yes, that something was distressing me, and a something connected with him.' He looked startled and uneasy at this announcement, and said hastily, 'He hoped I was not going away.' His voice quite faltered. I answered, 'Oh no, not yet.' You cannot think what a brightness spread over his face, 'and how his eyes sparkled! 'You gave me a terrible fright,' he said, adding that now, any other communication I might have to make, however unpleasant, he should be able to bear.

"'To prevent your fancy taking a wrong flight a second time,' said I, 'perhaps I had better make no more preambles, but tell you that I have a request to make to you, a favour to ask.'

"'A request, a favour of me!' he exclaimed. 'And pray, is it a fear of my refusal that disturbs you?' - These last words were said with a beautiful smile of kind meaning.

"'Exactly so!' I answered, quickly; 'I am exceedingly set upon your granting me this favour, and I am not at all sure that you will.'

"'Try me, at all events,' he said, with another smile.

"'You know, don't you,' I went on, concealing my increasing anxiety under an appearance of playfulness, 'that women are born busybodies, and cannot resist the

temptation of being diplomatists in a small way?' His eyes were fixed earnestly on me, as if to divine my words before they were spoken. 'Well, I want to be a peacemaker. A little bird has whispered to me, that there exists something like a feud between you and a venerable, kind relation of yours, who ——' I dared go no further, stopped by the change of expression in my listener's countenance: it was literally fearful; his brows lowered — his lips and nostrils quivered with scorn and hatred.

"'You allude to Monsignor Rodipani — to that gem of a bishop as well as an uncle.'

"He spoke in such a bitter tone that I only bowed assent.

"'May I ask, signorina, who revealed to you this relationship?'

"I did not feel sure that I was justified in saying who, so I kept silent.

"'The count, no doubt,' he went on; 'it is like one of his tricks. What right has that buffoon to interfere with my private affairs?'

"This contemptuous way of speaking of an estimable nobleman roused my indignation, and restored all my courage.

"'I beg, Signor Paolo, you will speak in my presence with more respect of a gentleman for whom I have a real esteem. Pray, understand that the only person who has ventured to interfere with your affairs is — myself. So pour out the vials of your wrath upon me — exclusively upon me — as the offence, if offence there be, is exclusively mine.'

"He replied in a very subdued tone,

"'Pardon my warmth; it was not, could not be, in-

tended for you. Your motives, I know, cannot but be the purest, the noblest. Will you let me hear what it is you wish me to do?"

"This was spoken so calmly, and so gently, that a ray of hope came and cheered me into believing that I might yet be the conqueror in this struggle. I said accordingly, —

"‘Though your manner is not very encouraging, it shall not prevent my attempting to perform what I consider to be a duty. -You will listen to me, will you not?’

"As he did not speak, I continued:

"‘I can perceive that you have, or that you fancy you have, legitimate causes of complaint against this connection of yours. I will even allow that you have right on your side. But is not forgiveness of injuries the sublimest prerogative of a noble soul? The bishop is old, infirm, most likely repentant — perhaps, he often gloomily meditates on death, which cannot be far distant for him, and, so meditating, wishes to be reconciled to his only near relation, before going to render his last account. Could you, would you refuse him this consolation, before he dies?’

"‘If he is in pressing need of this great consolation,’ said Signor Paolo, drily, ‘let him ask me for it, and I will then consider what it becomes me to do.’

"I answered: ‘Your words are both haughty, and, I regret to say, unfeeling. A man of monsignor’s age and station in life may reasonably object to making advances, when he is uncertain in what spirit they may be received. Remove that uncertainty. Send him a line — just one line, breathing duty and submission.’

"At this word, Signor Paolo grew black in the face, and through his clenched teeth, exclaimed, —

"Never, never! an act of submission from me! Not to secure eternal life! All hell would laugh and paradise weep if I did so. Is the tortured to beg forgiveness of the torturer, the victim on the scaffold of the executioner? That man was the torturer and executioner of my family. He cursed my parents on the day they became man and wife, and ever after shrank from them as though they had been impure criminals; he allowed my father — my father, innocent of all offence — to rot in a prison, while, had he only raised his little finger, he could have had him righted; he allowed my mother, his own niece, in whose veins ran his own blood, to faint away on the steps of his palace with the fatigue of long waiting; he allowed her to die slowly of a broken heart; and when I was cast on the world at seventeen, an orphan and a beggar, he did his best to add degradation to my misery — yes, he proposed an infamous bargain to me, that I should discard, as an unsightly garb, my father's name — his unsullied name; I was to sell it to this judge in Israel for thirty pieces of silver.'

"I don't know what impression they may produce on you — paper is but a poor conductor of the electricity of passion; but the words, voice, and look made me feel as I never felt before in my life. I was ready to cry, and fall at his feet, and beg him to forgive me, but I could not speak a single syllable for the lump in my throat. Do you believe in magnetism — in that mysterious power which puts your will at the mercy of another's will? I begin to do so; he might have commanded me at that moment, and I should have submis-

sively obeyed. So young! so heroic! I can't describe to you how he looked, standing there alone — one against the world! Even I, striving to lay another burden upon him! So preposterous of me to compare him to any one; and yet the only way I have of making you comprehend at all what I mean, is to say he was like Mario at Ravenswood, when he hurls at the Ashtons that contemptuous curse, *Vi disprezzo*. Do you remember how it always made us cry, and long that we could have helped him, and given proper courage to that poor little Lucy? Well, I felt a thousand *thousand* times more, only I could not shed a tear, or show any feeling — just as if I had been turned into Lot's wife.

"At last I stammered out some sort of apology. I said how sorry I was for giving him pain, and that the only excuse I could plead for my indiscretion was the great interest I felt in him, my sole prompter. It went to my heart to see how instantly this pacified him. His face cleared, and he even smiled on me; it was like a ray of sunshine putting out a fire, for every lurking trace of anger disappeared. I had never heard him speak with the voice with which he asked me, 'Do you really take an interest in me?'

"'How can you doubt it?' said I, almost indignantly.

"'In fact, how could I? Had you not felt for me, would you ever have done me all the good you have?'

"'The credit you give me is so little deserved that you mortify me. What have I ever done for you, who truly have done so much for me?'

"'I will tell you,' he said, gravely; 'you have satisfied the great desire of my nature — that craving after sympathy of the softest kind, and without which

man is, and must be, for ever incomplete; you have shed around me all those refining and elevating influences, of which God has given the secret and privilege to women; you have made me a far better, far richer, far happier being than I was when I first met you. Is that nothing?’

“‘Ah! don’t say that, Signor Paolo. Good works, to be meritorious, ought to be consciously done, and I am too honest to say I tried to confer any of these benefits on you.’

“He said, ‘I don’t see the necessity of the intention; the good produced is no less a good — the recipient is no less benefited, though it may be done undesignedly. What is it to me though the rose be unconscious of its perfume, and the nightingale of the charm of its song, and the sun of its beneficent action on men and things? For me it is enough to know that the sun, and the nightingale, and the rose do me good, to feel thankful to them, and to bless them. Allow me on the same ground to feel thankful to you and to bless you.’

“To be thanked and blessed in such a strain is a trial of a new kind, I can tell you; up to that moment I had no idea that praise and blessings might be more difficult to bear than abuse. Perhaps it was only the effect of his voice. There were tones in it such as I had never heard in his or any other voice before — tones that made my heart beat high and fast. So I hastened to reply, ‘If I am to accept your thanks for the past, it is on the condition that you help me to deserve them for the future. Is there nothing I can do for you *wittingly*?’

“‘Ask, rather,’ was his impetuous rejoinder, ‘if there be anything you could not do for me. Have you, then,

no conception of your power over me? I am like soft wax in your hands, ready to be moulded to any shape you please. There are stirring within me strange energies, either for good or evil; bid them take a lofty aim. I am, as it were, a child groping his way in the dark — illumine my path, and make me good. I feel as if I had something here and here,' pointing to his forehead and his heart — 'something like a golden thread worth discovering. Help me, and make me great. Be my good genius; be my muse; be —'

"He gasped for breath as he looked me full in the face.

"'A poor muse, but a willing one,' muttered I, scarcely knowing what I said, I was so much moved; 'what must I do to make you good and great?'

"He rose and cried, with outstretched hands, 'Bid me be so through you and for you.'

"The burst of passion with which this was said left no doubt as to its meaning. Those large eyes of his, riveted on mine, were too full of eloquent comment on what had fallen from his lips, to leave room for any misunderstanding. The intensity of my embarrassment amounted to positive agony. I could think of nothing to say, and yet speak I must, or how would he construe my silence? It generally happens, so at least I have read somewhere, that a woman in such a dilemma is sure to say or do the very thing that increases the difficulty of her position; just like a bird but partially caught in a snare, which in its frightened eagerness to disengage itself, only gets more and more entangled. This was the case with me. What do you suppose that I did but put on a lively air, cruelly belied by the thumping of my heart, and say in a would-be spirited

manner, 'Do you know, Signor Paolo, this looks like a declaration in due form?'

"'It is,' was the quick answer.

"I cannot tell what change came over my countenance at these words. I suppose I must have *looked* indignant, though I confess to my shame I did not *feel* so. Perhaps my cheeks on fire — all my blood had rushed to my head — gave him the impression that he had affronted me; for, joining his hands in supplication, he said, hurriedly, 'Do not be offended. For God's sake, do not mistake me. My heart was too full. I must speak or die. It was in no spirit of presumption that I said what I said; we feel our own worthlessness, do we not? and yet we aspire to heaven. It is in such a spirit I regard you. It is in all humility that I lift up my hands and cry, "Unworthy as I am, let me try and deserve you."'

"Was there ever a lover's suit more gently or modestly urged? I was fairly conquered, and I gave him leave to try. In what words I do not know, but I know that I did so. He half shut his eyes, like one dazzled, and put his hand on his heart as if in pain. 'Then I am blessed indeed,' he murmured; 'it is almost too great joy to bear; you are an angel; yours in life and death.'

"Aunt, who, during the last ten minutes, had been absent from the room, reappeared. Oh! had she come only a few seconds sooner! She was so struck by his extreme paleness, that she asked if he were ill. 'Yes, ill with happiness,' he said; and so saying he knelt down at her feet, laid one of her hands on his head, then, drawing it down to his lips, kissed it fervently,

and without another word departed. As for me, I fell on aunt's neck, and sobbed aloud.

* * * * *

"I had so far succeeded in mastering my emotion as to be able to speak, when the sound of uncle's voice made me hurry to my own room. It was then I added that confused P. S. to my last letter, which must, I am sure, have sorely perplexed you.

"Uncle detained my aunt till dinner time, and afterwards visitor succeeded visitor, as if on purpose to vex me; the chevalier, the count, Captain and Mrs. Paddock, all came. We had tea, and plenty of talk, with interminable lectures from Mr Jones on 'English Railroads' and the 'Bank of England.' Fancy with what interest I must have listened. I could see that aunt was half distracted with impatience. However, *à quelque chose malheur est bon*. I made use of the opportunity to beg the count not to trouble himself any more about our little scheme, as I had found Signor Paolo quite intractable on the subject. The count was full of regrets, the more particularly as the hundred scudi had been actually paid that very morning to the person he had mentioned to us, and everything promised well. He proposed to return me the money, and let the loss be his; of course, I would not hear of any such thing. I am not sure that he will not carry out the plan single-handed; he hinted as much. Who knows, after all, but that the old bishop will relent, and himself make the first advance to Signor Paolo?

"At last, every one was gone, and I might say good night and go too. Aunt soon came to my room, and I made a full confession of what had passed between Signor Paolo and me. Her first feeling was

rather one of pleasure than of pain. 'She is so fond of him, she said she was perfectly sure he would make me happy. But when she came to think of Mr. Jones, her heart misgave her, nor was mine better assured. Signor Paolo was, there was no denying the fact, under the present circumstances, about the last man Mr. Jones would accept as a husband for me. And as to my marrying without Mr. Jones's consent, that was an absolute impossibility. 'You are entirely dependent on your uncle, my poor child,' said my aunt; 'it is my fault, all my fault. Had I only been a little prudent, a little less credulous, I should have been able to help you through this difficult pass. But, though no longer young when I married a second time, I was utterly without worldly experience, and knew no more about marriage settlements than a child of six years old. All that was mine is now your uncle's, and I have not a penny I can call my own', and while she was saying this, the poor soul wrung her hands, and her eyes turned into fountains. It was now my turn to give consolation, which I did as best I could, and then once more we discussed Signor Paolo. Our long and anxious consultation left me aware, that all I could expect from my aunt, at least as long as this state of bewilderment lasts, is the warmest sympathy, but not the guidance I need. So I took the lead myself and began, 'You can enlighten me on one point, which once clear to me, I shall see what my future conduct ought to be. Do you think that what I said to Signor Paolo — I mean that the sort of encouragement I gave him — entitles him to consider me as — engaged to him, and must have and has been so construed by him?'

"She reflected for a minute or so, then replied, 'If I am to speak conscientiously, I must say, yes.

"'Then I know what I have to do,' said I. 'As an honest girl, I must abide by the consequences of my imprudence, put my trust in God and in the chapter of accidents.'

"'Unless,' said aunt, and then hesitated. 'But no — it would break his heart.'

"I entreated her to speak openly to me.

"'I was going to say,' she went on, 'unless you were to appeal to Signor Paolo, and—'

"'And prevail on him to set me free — in fact, deny my own words; is that what you mean, dear aunt?' She nodded assent.

"'Well, come what will of it,' I rejoined, 'I will never do that. Rash I may have been, selfish and unfeeling I won't be.'

"Aunt took me in her arms, and kissed and blessed me fervently. 'God bless you, my child! you are a noble creature.' But I need not repeat what further she said; you know how partial she is to me. So, you see, it is all settled. I am engaged, and intend to let things take their course.

* * * * *

"Am I really in love with this young man? indeed, that is really more than I can say, I am sure; at any rate, not in love as heroines of novels are. I think him handsome, to begin with, and a genius in painting: as to that I have not the least doubt. I admire his many fine qualities, his original turn of mind; above all, his simple, generous heart. His conversation is

agreeable to me; his approbation flatters me; I like him to be near me; in short, none of the young men I have met up to this day ever either struck my fancy or interested me as much as he does. But is this real love? Love! Can I lay my hand on my heart, and say honestly that my whole soul is wrapt up in him, as the phrase goes — that he is the sunshine of my life — that it would break my heart if I were separated from him? To none of these and other fine things I have read of in novels, can I plead guilty. Either I am not born with such exalted feelings, or the romance writers over-colour their pictures for the sake of effect. On the contrary, far from thinking him the most perfect of mortals, I am keenly alive to his short-comings, to his prejudices — I was almost going to say, to what is ridiculous in him; positively, some of his absurd notions about dress, &c., deserve no other name than ridiculous. Nay, if the truth must be told, there is even fermenting within me at this very moment something uncommonly like a leaven of irritation against him, for the world of trouble he is bringing on me. I was so happy, so without care, before I knew him. Ah! well, I am nevertheless resolved to do my duty by him, so long as he does his by me — I mean, continues modest and submissive. Woe to him if he—! Much will depend on his behaviour at our first meeting again.

. . . . In spite of my grand airs, I turn hot and cold only to think of it. Alas! be a woman of the world as much as you will, learn to sweep majestically into crowded assemblies, and to stand the gaze of hundreds of admirers, what does it avail? The moment you meet a certain pair of predestined eyes, the Juno vanishes, and there remains in her place an arrant cow-

ard. However, I should not advise him to put on conquering looks, or—

* * * *

“Conquering looks! he is the meekest, the gentlest, the discreetest of lovers. He has been here. Oh! could you have seen his confusion! how white and red he turned! how his voice shook! it was absolutely painful! I had to encourage him. He has thought of another subject for a picture, and sketched it in already: Beatrice (of course, Beatrice means Lavinia) revealing herself to Dante; the scene is in the thirtieth canto of the *Purgatory*. He was anxious to know if I approved of the subject, and of the manner in which he thinks of treating it. I agreed that the subject was a fine one, and, of course, the sequel is a rendezvous. We are to go and see the sketch to-morrow, and, at the same time, I am to give him another sitting. Only two or three more sittings, and my portrait will be finished. Visitors came in and interrupted our conversation. I am glad to say that the circle of our English acquaintance widens apace. I am often now straitened for time. He quietly dropped into a corner, but though I did not look his way, I still felt his eye was ever on me, and — if ever eye expressed adoration, his did. Dante must have looked thus, when he met the shade of his Beatrice. I was quite touched. I do, indeed, think that I love him.

* * * *

“The Mancini are of a noble family. You will find a number of them mentioned in Maunder’s *Biographical Dictionary*. Cardinal Mazarin’s nieces were all Mancini, and all married very high. Three were duchesses, if I don’t mistake, and the fourth a countess.

The name sounds well, ten thousand times better than that dreadfully dubious monosyllable, Jones. On this one subject I do agree with uncle; he can neither hear it spoken nor see it in print, without a shuddering anticipation of its being used as a target for ridicule. I know very well that this is a mere vulgar prejudice, for what can there be in a name, that it should make or unmake a man's claim — I don't say to respectability, but — to refinement and to move in a certain rank? Well, though my reason tells me, that we really lay too much stress on what *he* calls 'accidents,' yet I cannot help shrinking from Jones and liking Mancini. Signora Paolo Mancini *tout court* may look rather meagre, but it is at least euphonic. If he were to settle in England — Signor Paolo I mean — I have not a doubt in the world of his being knighted. Was Rubens a knight or baronet? I forget. I hear you say, a knight is a poor pittance — poor indeed for one who till lately never even thought of a husband under a marquis. Ah! bygones must be bygones now. My lot is cast in a humble sphere, and I must reconcile myself to it. After all, there is a probability, or rather perhaps a possibility, that his relation the old bishop may leave him a fortune, and enable him to take the position his birth entitles him to. Yet, why should I want a fortune left to him? His genius ensures his making one; and even if poor, is not genius an excellent passport into the highest society? Who cares whether such men as Sir E. L. or C. S. are rich or poor? They move in the best circles — nay, are included among the guests of royalty. No one but feels honoured by their notice.

* * * * *

"When we reached the studio this morning, we found the gentleman in a towering passion, *à propos* of some arrests that were made last night. You can't imagine what violent language he used, abusing everything and everybody. I can understand that his feelings should be far from friendly towards the powers whose troops occupy his country. Let us only consider what we should feel if we had a French or Austrian garrison in London! I can understand also that he should find fault with the government of the Pope. It must be galling to have an old priest lording it over one. But that he should attack the principle of royalty itself — that he should denounce all the European Governments as immoral, nay, unchristian, all aristocracies as selfish and corrupt, all social distinctions as mere shams — that *was* more than I could bear, and I frankly told him so. 'Whatever you do,' said I, 'don't attack my beloved aristocracy — English aristocracy I mean — that is, if you care that we should remain good friends. My reverence for it is unbounded.'

"He looked rather thrown back, but replied, 'I wish they may deserve your reverence. At all events, it is very stupid of me to dwell upon politics. I shall do so no more,' and he painted on for some time in silence. His fit of taciturnity did not last long, however, and presently he began talking as cheerfully and pleasantly as usual. A great blessing, is it not, that he should be so — docile is the word that falls from my pen, only that is not a nice expression to apply to one's future husband. I certainly am aware that I have great influence over him, but I shall always use it for his good. Sincerely speaking, I feel that I have

in fact to educate him. He is primitive, full of asperity, uncivilized, but a diamond in its rough state; yes, but a *real* diamond, which only wants polishing to send forth brilliant rays far and wide. I mean that my hands shall bestow this polish. A proud and noble task it will be to refine and raise to its natural level this rugged nature, and to have both the power and the will to do so. Now for the climax. My sitting over, I was about to rise, when he stopped me, and knelt down to mark out with chalk the outlines of my foot on the floor.

“‘Why do you do that?’ I asked, and he answered, ‘That I may kiss the spot on which the sole of your shoe has rested.’”

“Own that it was delicate and poetical, and, of course, I did not grudge or refuse him this innocent gratification: what woman would refuse to give happiness at so small a cost? Now roaring like a lion, anon cooing like a dove, whatever his other deficiencies, certainly my Domenichino does not sin by want of originality.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

Optimism and Pessimism.

PAOLO would not have changed his lot for that of the mightiest monarch on earth. No throne but seemed low, no crown but seemed valueless, compared to that throne and crown to which he aspired. There was but one Lavinia in creation, and that one he might, nay he would, one day call his own. What prospect in the world so glorious as this! and that he, of all men,

should be chosen for that triumph — the thought had something maddening, mingled as it was with retrospective terror unutterable, lest it should have been otherwise, and joy without end at the dear reality. Paolo's happiness, in short, was so intense and complete, that it seemed to him a foretaste of heaven. But for a deep sense of kindly pity towards all of his sex who had missed being the chosen of Lavinia — but for an irresistible yearning to pour into some friendly bosom the exuberance of his felicity — Paolo would have lost all consciousness of still belonging to this mortal world, so high did his soul float on the wings of enthusiasm, so luminous the atmosphere, so ineffable the harmonies, so celestial the dews, in which it revelled.

The friendly bosom, of course, could be no other than that of Salvator, and he it was who had to bear the brunt of this new psychological phase of Paolo's mind. As an enthusiast of the deepest hue, as Paolo's ardent friend and admirer, as one over head and ears in love himself, and who had, to the best of his power, encouraged his friend to enlist in the amatory band, Salvator was ready and qualified at all times to act the part of sympathizing confidant to his brother painter; but never more so than at this particular juncture, when, owing to certain circumstances, his own mental diapason had reached a pitch but little, if any, short of that of his excited leader.

Salvator, in fact, had several legitimate causes for elation. His fortunes, since we lost sight of him, had thriven wonderfully. To his title and functions of scene-painter in ordinary to the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos, had been added in rapid succession those of

poet, designer of costumes, director of choruses, and prompter. In short, the active little body had become the Atlas of the theatrical department at Villa Torralba. Nor was this shower of honours and appointments the only mark of encouragement he had received at her ladyship's hand. Other tokens of his noble employer's favour, far more substantial, and no less welcome, had followed apace. Thanks to these, Salvator had been able to get rid of his only crying debt, the one to his late landlord, been able to buy the long-desired silk mantelet for Clelia, the long wanted suit of black, and three changes of linen for himself, and, last not least, to hire a decent room in the vicinity of Paolo's studio, and to pay a quarter's rent in advance.

When we add that, after all this outlay, the little painter found himself undisputed master of one-and-thirty scudi, actually jingling harmoniously in his pocket — one-and-thirty scudi, with which he was at a loss what to do — the reader will rightly understand the revulsion of feeling attendant upon such an unprecedented — we were almost going to say unnatural — state of affairs. To give an idea of Salvator's elated mood, it will suffice to say, he actually proposed point-blank to Clelia, and with the utmost gravity, as they were now out of the reach of poverty, to marry at once. To one whose imagination could travel at such speed on his own account, the aerial flights in which Paolo was indulging seemed quite in the common course of nature. Nay, occasionally, Salvator's Pegasus would devour space and time, at a rate too precipitate even for Paolo, and stoppages and rebukes would follow. Thus, for instance, Salvator would hear of no term of probation for Paolo — probation forsooth — when the

young lady was smitten to the very core of her heart, and was probably on her knees, trying to win a consent from that old bear, her uncle; *al suo pie la sventurat.*

"Oh, Salvator!" remonstrated Paolo.

"Salvator, here; Salvator, there; I haven't been making love for four years not to know something of women's ways by this time," and allowing no opportunity for any more objections, off went the little man, depicting Paolo as the happiest of husbands and mortals, driving his carriage and four, and giving princely entertainments to his friends in the splendid Villa Mancini — that was to be.

"How you talk, Salvator! as if I cared for villas and entertainments," protested sentimental Paolo. "No; it is her heart that I want, and a quiet nook, where I can hide my treasure from every eye but my own. I shall be jealous, very jealous."

"Ah! indeed," quoth Salvator; "that alters the case. *Gia la fiera gelosia; versa tutto il suo velen.* If you are jealous, by all means have a quiet nook; only not too far out of the way, or you know I could not visit you; though, to be sure, I am in a fair way to having a gig of my own. I don't suppose you mean to give me up, or Clelia either, eh?"

Here there was an angry protest from Paolo against so offensive an hypothesis, followed by a counter protest from Salvator, that, as his practical view of things was unpalatable, perhaps the best plan was for him to hold his tongue, a resolution only formed to be broken, succeeded, as it immediately was, by an *ex-abrupto* motion from the little man of "Suppose we were to fix

on the same day for both our marriages? A capital idea that, — what do you say, Paolo?"

With the exception of sundry of these little ebullitions, Salvator, as a rule, was content to take his cue from Paolo, before bringing to bear on his friend's effusions any of those choice scraps of his operatic repertory which the analogy of sentiment or of situation prompted. For instance, a fine tenor voice would occasionally inform the public — at least, such part of the public as chose to loiter over the Pincio after dusk — that there existed *in rerum naturâ* a certain young lady (name not given) — *Bella siccome un angelo*, whom Heaven had created on purpose — *Il ciel l' ha fatta nascere* — for a certain gentleman of the singer's acquaintance, which gentleman having set it down as an incontrovertible fact, that *Quanti beni ha terra e cielo, l' amor suo mi può donar*, gave fair warning to any one disposed to question his assertion, that *Suoni la tromba, intrepido; Io pugnèrò da forte*, and so on.

These points settled and resettled to their mutual satisfaction, our two *innamorati* would leave the Pincio, with perhaps a parting apostrophe to the moon, when there was one, and repair to their separate homes with heavy steps, but light hearts, to meet again on the morrow at dusk, under the obelisk, to repeat much the same things, and so on evening after evening.

If there ever was a spiritual passion, it was this of Paolo's, so exclusively and entirely did it feed on the past and the future, so little did it demand from the present. Lucky that it was so, for the present was very parsimonious to the young dreamer. Never, at any period of their acquaintance, had he seen so little of Miss Lavinia (the lessons for some reason or other

were stopped altogether), and that little always in the presence of strangers; never had she meted out to him with so chary a hand those imponderable and invaluable tokens for favour, which in the time gone by she had showered on him.

Was Miss Jones's reserve a sacrifice on the altar of prudence, or was it a part of her educational scheme for Paolo, or the result of a vague notion of having given so much already as to be fairly excused from making any further outlay? Be this as it may, Paolo was perfectly satisfied with the little he received. His happiness was independent of outward circumstances; his love, his faith in her and himself, his recollections of what had been, his fond imaginings of what might be, were all-sufficient for him. Truly, Paolo bore his own paradise within him.

He was now determined to make a clean breast of it to Thornton; but Thornton seemed equally determined to give his young friend no chance of doing so, at least in the natural way which Paolo would have preferred. Ever since the Roman had dined at the Palazzo Morlacchi, no reference whatever to the English family had passed Mortimer's lips. Until his confession were made, each day that went by brought with it a fresh feeling of remorse to Paolo; so one fine morning he took the bull by the horns, and said, hurriedly, —

"You were right after all, Mortimer, — I am in love with Miss Lavinia."

"No news to me," answered the Englishman, with a start, however, which gave the lie direct to his words; "thus far the first part of my prophecy is fulfilled; now for the second."

"And pray what is the second?" inquired Paolo.

"Waste of time and of powers in pursuit of a chimera, disappointment, misery, and gnashing of teeth."

"Might you not as well prophesy *new* powers created by love divine, some noble work the result, her hand the prize and reward of success?"

"Ay, her hand to be sure," sneered Mortimer. "Let us have it a match by all means. Were there ever two lovers better assorted? youth, health, rich blood, smooth skin, on both sides. Quick! send for a priest, and let us have the *conjungo* pronounced on these two bodies. Never mind the souls — they may match or not; who cares if they do not? Not you for one. You would marry on such terms; yes, you would if you could — thank your stars that you cannot."

"I protest to God," cried Paolo, enthusiastically, "that her beauty is her least attraction to me; it is her soul, her divine soul, that I covet, and which I must conquer or die."

"You have known this lady for two months, seen her, I believe, at most perhaps thirty times; seen her more or less in a *pose*, that is, in the natural attitude of a young person who wishes to attract. By what mysterious process have you, on so short a trial, acquired as thorough a knowledge of her soul as if you had made it yourself? Either you labour under a delusion, or you are gifted with miraculous penetration."

"Two predestined souls," answered Paolo, "need but to come in contact for a second, in order to recognize, and have a thorough revelation of, each other. In fact, they are but the two halves of a whole tending with irresistible force to reconstitute itself. Now you may sneer at your case."

"I will do better than that," said Mortimer. "Though you tempt me sorely, I shall leave you unchecked to your Platonic theories. I will ask you only one sober question — Are you prepared to thrust yourself on a reluctant family?"

"I would rather die," said Paolo, sharply. "No; my motto is, *Chi non mi vuole, non mi merita* (who will not have me, deserves me not)."

"Very well, that is all that is necessary, for then you may renounce any more speculations as to what is an impossibility for you. You might as well set about wooing the moon, or one of the stars to come down and marry you, as this young lady. Can you bring yourself to suppose that Mr. Jones has raised this flower with all the care and expense he has done, merely to see it bloom on the bosom of a poor Roman painter?"

"I may make a great name?" suggested Paolo, half proudly, half deprecatingly.

"My dear boy, were you Phidias, Ictinus, and Apelles rolled into one, do you think Mr. Jones would ever consider you his equal?"

"Not his equal!" repeated Paolo, in a sort of shout, and starting off his seat.

"Not his equal," quietly asserted Mortimer again. "Man is never so well pleased as when he can draw a line between himself and his fellow-man, and write upon it, 'No trespassing allowed.' This drawing of lines of demarcation is an art in which we Englishmen excel; we practise it even against our own kin. As far as foreigners are concerned, we place them exactly where we place our own poor relations; not more illiberal in this, however, than your own haughty ancestors of imperial Rome. Yes, we look down upon

them as we do upon 'debilitated cousins.' You shake your head, my wise friend; you think the picture overdrawn. I would swear to its having been taken from life, and a good likeness also. You may pound an Englishman in a mortar; but you will never pound out of him the conceit that he is made of finer clay than other mortals. Mr. Jones was born and brought up in this creed, and in this creed he will die. Add to pride of race, pride of money, and look to your laurels — chances I mean."

"I know you don't like to be contradicted on certain topics," said Paolo, "or I should have something to say."

"Speak it out; never fear contradicting me. I court contradiction for once."

"If so, what I had to say is this," resumed Paolo, "that unfortunately for the success of your argument, it proves too much, and to prove too much, you know, is to prove nothing. Race-proud and purse-proud as Mr. Jones may be, he is far less exclusive than you make him out. No one can treat the count and chevalier more politely, and yet they are foreigners."

"But the count and chevalier, child that you are, have handles to their names, and that makes up for the original sin of their being foreigners. A title is a talisman no true-born Briton resists. England is the paradise of title-bearers. Titles govern us at home, represent us abroad, command our armies, manœuvre our fleets, and with some exceptions — all rules have some — fill every office of trust, honour, and emolument. Titles make our laws, our fashions, our rain and sunshine. Our daily papers register the comings and goings, feastings and fastings, of these celestial bodies; and a

little of this *prestige* extends even to titled foreigners. Such are not the rose certainly, but made in her likeness. Now you have the secret of Mr. Jones's politeness to counts and chevaliers. The day you are a marquis — you need not redden as if I accused you of wishing to be one — that day, if you were as stupid as an owl, the uncle will be at your feet, and the niece —”

“Don't say so of her,” interposed Paolo, with great warmth; “she is far above such paltry feelings; I know it, know it for a certainty;” and Paolo, with a flush of infinite complacency, related the conversation that had once passed between him and Miss Lavinia *à propos* of a certain engraving representing a bevy of young ladies adoring a coronet.

“All that sounds very sensible,” rejoined Mortimer; “but let me remind you that theory and practice are two things, not one. I have seen liberals of the sort you describe fall flat before a mere ‘honourable.’ However, our business lies not with the young lady now, but with the well-to-do middle-aged uncle, and the likelihood of your winning his good-will and money-bags.”

“Let us leave his money-bags out of the question; I am not, thank God, driving a bargain. He may keep his money or throw it out of the window, for all I care. I don't want it; I despise it,” protested Paolo.

“Indeed! Suppose, for supposing sake, you win the girl; you must have some of the money-bags also; or, my dear fellow, on what do you intend her to live? Beauties do eat, I assure you.”

“I intend her to live on the fruit of my own labour,” said Paolo; “I have done pretty well these two, last years, and I have saved something.”

"Your poor earnings and savings would not pay her dressmaker and milliner's quarter's bill. Consider now, as you have not considered before, that your goddess is accustomed to a certain style of living, which — I really don't say so from the spirit of opposition — which costs rather more than young painters can readily afford. Carriages and footmen, lady's-maids, and that sort of thing; and other sorts of things, that would be unintelligible to you at present, are not to be had without well-filled money-bags."

"Well, then, they must be done without," quoth Paolo.

"You cut the Gordian knot at your ease," returned Mortimer. "You, the native of a land where people generally live for themselves, and not for their neighbours; where, as Madame de Staël expresses it, 'the empire of self-love is almost null in society,' and both men and women of fortune speak as naturally of travelling by the diligence as they would of their carriage and four. But we are more civilized than that in our happy island; we live for society, and society returns the compliment; she metes out to us her consideration, and assigns us our place in the scale, in exact proportion with the external show we make, that is, of the amount of money we represent. You have thriven, therefore you deserved to thrive; such is the broad and not unphilosophical principle on which, as of necessity, society acts. She has no time to inquire into your moral and intellectual worth; but she can see at once your equipages; reckon the cost of your liveries, and the number and quality of your guests. In a community thus constituted, you understand the paramount importance of the appendages of wealth; they are part

and parcel of respectability, the *status civilis*, the *toga virilis*. He or she who loses them, loses caste. Brahmins and Pariahs are not alone to be found in India, and the said he or she sinks into the limbo of Nobodyism. And such would be the sorry fate of Signora Lavinia Mancini, were she deprived of any of the splendour of Miss Jones. What do you answer to this?"

"That you are describing an impossible social state, one that could not hold together for a single week," replied Paolo. "To begin with, who could marry in such a world?"

"Few would, and few do. Marriage is too costly a blessing to be indulged in without a tolerable income, which, translated, means 1,000*l.* or 1,500*l.* a year. Our young people of the carriage and footman class — a very large one in England — do not marry on less."

"And what becomes of the majority, who have not the indispensable 1,000*l.* or 1,500*l.* a year?" asked Paolo.

"They remain bachelors, and seek for equivalents. Society's legislation makes nobody better, wiser, or happier."

Paolo, looking perplexed, sat thinking for awhile, then said gravely, —

"Even if every syllable of what you have been telling me were Gospel truths, I would not despair; for the day she loves me — *loves* me, you understand — she will be willing, nay happy, to shake herself free from all these conventionalities, and to dare both mud and rain, leaning on my arm."

"Of a certainty she will, if *that* day ever comes," was Mortimer's answer; "but will it come? 'Don't

flatter thyself with being much loved by a woman who loves herself,' says Pythagoras. Two great passions cannot co-exist. Drunkards and gamblers care nothing for love. With a worldly woman, love is quite a secondary affair — the primary, is the world."

CHAPTER XIX.

Miss Lavinia in Déshabille.

MEANWHILE a certain seed sown by the count at Mr. Jones's convivial board — we mean that gentle hint for the private use of Miss Lavinia, about sundry wonderful pictures to be had almost for the mere trouble of the taking — well, that tiny seed, then, duly tended and nurtured, had so far grown and prospered as to give a fair promise of bearing fruit.

We have more pressing business on hand just now, than to enter into any detail of the skilful tactics, by which the two worthy confederates pushed on their new scheme. Besides, the process is as old as the world. We have inherited, all and each of us, from mother Eve a tender point, which puts us at the mercy of the first comer, who chooses to tickle it. Now, the count and the chevalier were first-rate hands at this sort of game, and under their clever management, both uncle and niece's vanity was easily excited; this was no sooner the case, than difficulties were made to arise, and competition to start up. Prince So-and-So was on the scent of the hidden treasures. Duke What-is-his-name had dealers out in search, and some Cardinal or other had received *carte blanche* from his Holiness to secure the "gems" for the Vatican gallery. To make a long story short, after being well tantalized and

brought to the proper pitch, Mr. Jones and Miss Lavinia felt like conquerors flushed with victory, when, late one night, and under the personal superintendence of the count himself, the "splendid remnants of a once princely gallery" were carried up to Palazzo Morlacchi, and deposited in Miss Lavinia's studio. There was as much mystery and as many recommendations to secrecy on this occasion, as if, instead of six small pictures, six barrels of gunpowder had been sent, for the purpose of blowing up Castle Sant' Angelo on the morrow.

The most immediate consequence of this eventful deed was, that Paolo next morning, scarcely an hour after his conversation with Mortimer, received a special summons to the presence of his English goddess. The *taboo*, which guarded from all eyes profane the six master-pieces, was not to extend, the reader may recollect, to Paolo. An exception in his favour had been asked by Miss Jones, and willingly conceded by the count. The command was couched in a note from the young Roman's *diva*, consisting of one line and a half, dear and precious at all times, doubly so now. The pretty autographs of which she had been so lavish up to the day of Paolo's passing the Rubicon, had stopped altogether ever since, and the young Roman was literally athirst for the even, steady, elegant hand-writing, every external perfection of which represented to his eyes — of such stuff are lovers made — a corresponding perfection of the writer's inner soul. Needless to say, he drank in eagerly each word of the blessed missive, and hastened to obey the summons.

He was met in the hall by Miss Lavinia's maid, evidently waiting for him, and ushered by her into the *sanctum sanctorum*, the young lady's private library

and study, wherein he had set no foot for — what appeared to him ages. Paolo was asking himself, with a heart that beat hard against his ribs, what could be the meaning of this sudden shower of favours, when an inner door was impetuously opened, and Miss Lavinia ran towards him, and with a little shout of triumph, exclaimed, "We have got them at last; come and see." With these words she led the way to that part of the room enclosed by a screen, which she held as peculiarly *her* atelier, and, pointing to six pictures of different dimensions ranged against the wall, she added, with great volubility, "Six jewels, are they not? we had a narrow escape of losing them. I will tell you all about it by-and-by; but there are people in the drawing-room just now, so I can't stay even for your congratulations — I leave you in good company," and she was off like a dart.

Paolo was disappointed, to be desired to look at pictures, when he had anticipated something, he scarcely knew what, but something very different; and, worse still, to be told to proceed to the inspection without the balm of *her* presence. However, he had a duty to discharge, and he set himself to it conscientiously, though with a very sorry face. He examined all and each of the pictures long and closely, took them up one by one, carried them to the window, carefully scanned the names or initials on them, scanned their backs, wetted a corner of his handkerchief, and rubbed some apparently suspicious points, and at last returned them to their place, and sat down before them with as disconsolate a countenance as that he wore when we saw him for the first time seated in front of his own Brennus and Co.

Miss Lavinia surprised him in this melancholy contemplation. Her features, too, had undergone a change in the interval of her absence; a cloud had been gathering on her brow, which the sight of the young painter's elongated face was little calculated to disperse, and the inflections of her voice had lost much of the buoyancy they had revealed only a quarter of an hour ago. "You don't seem to enjoy the company of my favourites very much," said she, with the shadow of a shade of pique.

"I am sorry, very sorry, not to be able to sympathize more warmly with you," said Paolo, trying to speak kindly and cheerfully.

"Perhaps," returned the lady, and the voice had a deeper tinge of bitterness — "perhaps you consider such masters as Del Credi and Spada as beneath your admiration."

The Italian looked up at her in astonishment, and replied, "Have I ever done or said anything which could lay me open to the imputation of the monstrous self-conceit your words seem to imply?" He paused, as if expecting some answer, but as there came none, he went on: "If I have, pray let me know when and how, that I may make honourable amends. I have the greatest respect for the names you have just mentioned, and rank *their* productions very high," with a marked emphasis on the word *their* — "I mean those that are really theirs."

"Do you mean to say that these pictures are not genuine?" asked the lady, sharply.

"To the best of my knowledge they are not," was the dry, decided answer.

Miss Lavinia started, and impatiently crushed a

letter she was holding in her hand. This movement did not escape the keen eyes of the young painter; he added, with considerable warmth and earnestness, "I need not repeat how I regret to say anything that annoys or disappoints you; but am I wrong in believing that what you wanted in sending for me was honest advice, and not flattery?"

"Oh! as for flattery, no one can accuse you of any talent that way," retorted Miss Jones. Uttered in a different tone, the words might have been a merely playful repartee; as it was, they were weighty with reproach.

"Is it a fault, then, to speak plain truth?" exclaimed Paolo; "must one guard against it as against loaded pistols?"

"One ought, at all events, to guard against allowing preconceived notions to warp one's judgment," said Miss Jones, coldly.

"What preconceived notions could I have in this matter?" asked Paolo, his face growing dark.

"The buying of these pictures was the count's proposal; that was enough to prejudice you against them from the first. Whatever the count does or advises is wrong in your eyes, even what he does or advises for your own good."

"Pray, not a word more on that subject," said Paolo, making a great effort to control his feelings.

"Yes, whatever he does or advises is sure to meet with strenuous opposition from you," persisted the young lady.

"And with the most entire approbation from you," rejoined the young man. "Am I to shut my eyes, and declare what is mediocre, beautiful — extol copies, as

originals, and that, too, solely on the strength of a count's recommendation? I defy any one not purblind," continued Paolo, striding angrily towards the unlucky pictures, and pointing to them in succession — "I defy any one to say that that distorted arm could ever have been designed by Lionello, or that the colouring of that Madonna has the very least resemblance to Del Credi's colouring. As to those Canaletti, a pupil of six months' standing at San Luca would at a glance pronounce them spurious. I say again there never was a more bare-faced attempt at imposition."

"Are you aware that in saying so you impeach the character of a most respectable nobleman?" flashed out Miss Lavinia.

Paolo heard in these words the confirmation of his long-combated misgivings as to a certain foible of Lavinia's for titles, a foible the young democrat abhorred and recoiled from; hereupon, he entirely lost his temper. "Eh! dear me!" broke forth the young savage, in a passion; "to hear you, one would think this count was the fourth person of the Holy Trinity. What *do* you, what *can* you know, of this man and his respectability? No more than of the man in the moon. An utter stranger introduced to you by another utter stranger, casually met at a *table d'hôte*, that is all you have to found your opinion upon; unless you take it for granted that all sorts of goodness and worth are implied by the fact of being or styling oneself a count."

"Ah! indeed," said Miss Jones, with an adorably saucy toss of her head: "Will you be so good as to spare me a repetition of your tirades against all who are noble by birth? I know everything you have to say on that subject by heart."

"If you know everything by heart," began Paolo, and the deep colour in his cheek and the sparkle in his eye gave warning of some thundering retort; but at this critical moment the entrance of Miss Lavinia's maid obliged him to choke back his angry words. Miss Jones was wanted in the drawing-room.

"What a bore!" groaned Miss Lavinia. "Don't go away till I come back;" and with this injunction she once more left the Italian to his thoughts.

Paolo was wounded to the quick, less by the contradiction he had met with than by the manner in which it had been offered. Hitherto so gentle, and kind, and forbearing, how was it that on a sudden Lavinia stood before him, bitter, imperious, and harsh? For the first time he perceived a tone in her voice, a look in her eyes, an expression in her face, of which he could never have surmised the possible existence under her former tones and looks.

"How fiercely she stood up in defence of her dear humbug of a count!" thought he, striding up and down the narrow limits of the young lady's studio. "Between his opinion and mine, she did not hesitate for an instant. Well, let her trust in him, and believe in his wonders. What was the use of sending for me, since she had made up her mind already? To admire her purchase, I suppose. I begin to suspect Thornton is right after all. So long as you humour their whims, these proud islanders welcome you; dare to differ from them, and they throw you over without ceremony. I wonder how long she means to leave me here keeping guard on her treasures." Paolo took another turn, sat down, got up again, lost patience at last; and by the same way he had come in, made his exit.

Before proceeding further, we have two points to elucidate. The first is, that whatever might be Paolo's objections to aristocracy as an institution (the reader must not forget that he was a warm admirer of the Gracchi), he was too much a man of his time, and had intimately associated with too many fine fellows bearing handles to their names, to share in the prejudice of his father and grandfather, against individual nobles. The little respect he entertained for Count Fortiguerra rested on quite other grounds than the fact of his being a count.

The second point we wish to clear up is in justice to Miss Lavinia. Let us then state at once that Paolo's opposition about the pictures, for the possession of which she had struggled with all the ardour and entireness of her nature, would not have put to flight her equanimity as it had done, but that at the moment she had had other and serious causes of vexation and provocation.

Miss Lavinia had got up that morning in the best of humours, and when, at breakfast, her aunt handed her a note containing an invitation to Prince Torlonia's first ball on the following Saturday, the best of humours had progressed into the highest spirits. In this happy frame of mind she had written her line and a half to Paolo, and given orders for his admission to her studio. Her greeting, though hasty (Admiral Blackett and his daughters were calling at the time, and she had to run away to them), had been cordial and gracious. So far all well; but in the short space of time between her first and second appearance in the studio, tidings had reached her, considerably ruffling the smooth surface of her morning mood. Now for some explanation of the occasion and nature of these tidings.

Miss Lavinia, in passing through Paris four months previously, had had some dresses made by that famous French artist of European celebrity, Madame Lamy Housset, of the Rue de la Paix. It does an author's heart good to pen such names. Let the uninitiated be informed that out of the pale of Madame Lamy Housset there is no possible salvation for an English lady. At least Miss Jones and some others thought so, though there was a lively opposition in favour of Madame Zenobia — no, Palmyra — the association of ideas mislead me — and the Palmyrites turned up their noses very high at the Lamy Houssetites. This is a digression made with the best intentions. Well, then, Miss Jones was so enchanted with the dresses furnished by Madame Lamy that she determined to order some more for the winter season to be sent to Florence, Hôtel Hartmann, where the Joneses intended to stay till the end of October at least, when, owing to an unaccountable whim of Mr. Jones, the family left Florence so precipitately, that theirs was more like a flight than a departure. Miss Jones did not forget her dresses, but left the most minute directions with M. and Madame Hartmann about the expected box from Paris, desiring that it should be immediately sent to her at Rome, addressed to the care of the British Consul there. Full six weeks having elapsed, and there being no box forthcoming, Lavinia wrote to Madame Lamy Housset, to demand an explanation of the delay. Madame Lamy Housset politely answered by return of post, that, according to Miss Jones's orders, the dresses had been duly forwarded to Florence four weeks back, but all search there for Miss Jones having proved fruitless, the box had been sent back to Paris, and had just reached her (Madame L.

H.). Was Madame L. H. to send it to Rome or elsewhere?

I leave it to the public to imagine what were, what must have been, Miss Jones's feelings on reading this letter — the identical one we saw her clench and crush, while speaking to her lover. I am sure that all my fair readers will say as I do — and I do say it in the greatest earnest — that such a *contre-temps* was enough to provoke a saint, and just on the eve, too, of a ball at Torlonia's! It was while suffering under the first smart of this horrible intelligence, that Lavinia returned to Paolo, and, the magazine being full of powder, one stray spark, and it exploded.

Here arises a question. Would the explosion have taken place, had the untoward accident just related been made known to Miss Jones a fortnight back — that is, before Paolo made his declaration? All things considered, we must decide in the negative. During the period of what we may call Paolo's courtship, Miss Lavinia had not been without her share of crosses — who is? — and may have visited them, for aught we know, on her maid, or milliner, or the black steed which had the honour of carrying her, but they had nevertheless never clouded her intercourse with Paolo. To him, with one exception or two, and then in retaliation of real or imaginary offence given by him — to him she had invariably shown the same smooth brow, the same smiling face, the same amiable temper.

The fact is that, apart from the somewhat romantic and exciting circumstances under which she had made his acquaintance, and secured his services, apart even from the dazzle of his talent, Lavinia's fancy had been stirred into unusual animation by Paolo's odd ways of

thinking and acting, by his touchy independence, by his occasional impetuous outbursts *d'enfant terrible*. One and all of these gave him the charm of a novelty and rarity, and inspired her with the wish to please him. She had accordingly done what Thornton protested all young people do, when they have this wish to please one another — she had *posed* a little, that is, exhibited to Paolo only the sunny side of her nature.

A practice which, far from condemning, we would highly recommend, especially to married people, as nothing is more meritorious and conducive to harmony and happiness, than a constant habit of keeping one's disagreeableness in a misty back-ground, and concentrating the light of one's agreeableness on those one loves. How many households would be more peaceable and comfortable than they are, had man and wife retained their courtship attire, instead of showing themselves in the *déshabille* of dressing-gown and slippers!

To return: Paolo's declaration, like a stone thrown on the smooth surface of a lake, had somewhat altered the limpidity of Miss Jones's disposition. The conflict of feelings which it had aroused, the magnanimous resolution it had in a measure forced upon her, worked a material change in our heroine; for one thing, it set Paolo before her in quite a new light. He had too little hold on her to be accepted without reservation, too much to be discarded altogether. She looked down on him from all the height of her sacrifice, esteeming him immeasurably her debtor; the very task she had assumed, of educating him up to her own level, added not a little to the sense of her superiority, and to that of his obligations. Then, the young man's ecstatic contemplation of her, his discreet and submissive ways,

so different to what she had anticipated under the circumstances, while really touching her heart, nevertheless inspired her with a boundless confidence in her own power over him. This perfect security, and the new point of view from which she saw Paolo, brought about an unavoidable result. Whatever Paolo had won in one respect he had certainly lost in another.

We don't in general care extremely about much adorning of ourselves for people we have laid under great obligations, and on whose dutiful observance we can rely *quand même*. Miss Lavinia relaxed insensibly — without the least premeditation, of course — from that constant watch over herself, which had rendered her former intercourse with Paolo so even and agreeable, until this fine day, happening to be “out of sorts,” she gave way under middling provocation, and showed herself to be “out of sorts.”

Great was Miss Lavinia's surprise, and even alarm, when on her return presently to the atelier, making sure of finding Paolo where she had left him, she discovered the lair empty, and the wild cub gone; gone, no doubt, in anger; gone, perhaps, not to come again. It would only be what she deserved if he never did come back. A revulsion of feeling occurred. How had she dared to treat him so shamefully, after all the gentleness and delicacy he had shown, after all the obligations he had conferred on her! Was she not aware of how sensitive he was, how keenly alive to any slight from those he loved!

There is nothing like the fear of losing that, for which, in truth, we care but moderately, for enhancing its value and leading us to the retrospective discovery of how fond we were of it, though without our know-

ledge. Were it only a tame squirrel, the favourite of an hour, the moment it yields to its instincts, and seeks its former wild haunts, alas! alas! what a charming little creature it was! what a pet! how we loved it! And then the fuss we make, and the trouble we take to restore the dear runaway to its cage. Alas! alas! indeed.

There was a something considerably like this taking place in Miss Lavinia. The simple fact of Paolo's disappearance at once brought out all his excellences in strong relief, and threw his short-comings into the shade. Shame, repentance, and a grain of remorse dashed away all her late selfconceit, and notions of superiority. To the security in which she had basked of late, succeeded, as if by magic, the most poignant disquietude, lest he should be lost to her for ever. Acting upon the impulse given by the moment's feeling, the passionate and wilful girl had no rest, until she was seated in the carriage, her aunt by her side, and driving to Via Frattina.

Paolo was sitting astride a chair with both his elbows leaning on its highest rail, in the attitude we have already twice seen him in; the one, probably, into which he naturally fell when disturbed in his mind. He was in his shirt-sleeves — he felt hot, poor fellow! though a sharp wind was blowing — and seemed quite absorbed in watching the blue curls of smoke issuing from his mouth. A poor smoker at all times, Paolo had not placed a cigar between his lips since the day he had first called at Palazzo Morlacchi; and Lavinia knew this circumstance. Altogether, he had, at this present juncture, a devil-may-care appearance about him, which had little promise of good in it. At sight

of his unexpected visitors, Paolo started up with such impetuosity that he knocked over his chair, let the cigar drop to the ground, made a dash at his coat, and, as red as a burning coal (we don't know whether more from confusion, pleasure, or pain), muttered some hasty words of apology.

"It is we who ought to apologize," said Miss Jones; "I am come to sue for peace."

"For peace!" repeated Paolo; "to sue for peace, one must be first at war. I cannot conceive any such state between us; at least, not war existing on my side."

"Thank you," said Lavinia, "that sounds very kind and generous, if sincere," and checking herself, she added quickly, "and coming from you it must be sincere. However, you shall not prevent my making amends." He would have spoken, but she left him no time. "Yes, yes; I have been very provoking, foolish, opinionated, and rude."

"Oh! pray do not say another word," entreated Paolo.

"Well; say then that you forgive me."

"Indeed, I do with all my heart."

"Without mental reservation?" urged Miss Lavinia.

"Quite, quite, I assure you," eagerly affirmed the young man.

"No particle of resentment, not the tiniest, lurking anywhere?"

"Not the smallest atom."

"You are sure?" she went on insisting.

"Perfectly sure; I wish I knew how to convince you."

"Grant me a favour, and then I shall feel sure."

"Name it," said Paolo.

"Ah! but promise first that you will grant it."

"I have an objection to promising first," returned Paolo; "however, I will break through all rules this once; tell me your wish and it shall be done."

"That is really kind," burst out Lavinia, in happy triumph. "We are going to Torlonia's ball next Saturday; you can easily get a ticket, I know: come and join us there, will you?"

"If you insist on it, yes," said Paolo, with a shade of annoyance in tone and look; "but —"

"No 'buts,'" interrupted Lavinia; "I do insist, and I do so wish it. I want you to do the honours of your beautiful fresco."

"You know it already very well," said he.

"Never mind, I have never seen it with you, and that is what I long for."

"I shall feel myself so out of place at a ball," he pleaded; "I have never been at one; it is a sort of thing for which I have no fitness."

"How do you know that, if you have never been to one?" inquired the girl.

"Instinct often warns us of what will disagree with us," replied Paolo.

"Do it, then, as a sacrifice for my sake; do it for the pleasure your being there will give me."

Against a request like this, expressed in the tone of voice in which it was expressed, accompanied by the look with which it was accompanied (one of Lavinia's *irresistible* looks), Paolo was without defence of any kind, and surrendered at discretion. A defeat which the conqueror immediately acknowledged and rewarded,

by placing in the hand of the conquered the whitest, smallest, and softest of hands conceivable. This done, the visitors withdrew, the aunt rather at a loss to understand what was the importance of the interview she had witnessed, the niece in high glee at having killed two birds with one stone — namely, restored the fugitive squirrel to his cage, and improved the occasion for teaching him a new trick or two.

Paolo, as in duty bound, spent the rest of the day in calling himself a brute for his unmannerly flight from the studio — in restoring to Miss Jones her former character of angel — in lamenting his own fate in having to go to a ball — and in thanking Heaven that she would have him go. "For," argued Paolo, "if she did not care for me, what would it matter to her whether I was there or not?"

When, a day or two after, Paolo told Thornton that he was going to Torlonia's ball — he had secured a ticket by that time — Thornton made no objection; on the contrary, approved of it.

"Since nothing can open your eyes but sad experience," said the misanthrope, "no better opportunity than this for a beginning. A few hours spent with Miss Jones at a ball will give you more insight into her character than ten years of morning visits. There's nothing like a ball for showing female character; it draws the whole woman out. And then it is time you should get acquainted with your rival."

"My rival?" exclaimed the young man.

"Yes; with that terrible rival, who is everywhere and nowhere, who can goad you to madness, and yet cannot be called to account — the world."

CHAPTER XX.

Paolo sees a Ghost.

PAOLO arrived early at the ball. Shy people, from their invincible repugnance to making their entrance under the fire of many eyes, are, as a rule, among the earliest arrivals at all assemblies. No wonder, then, at Paolo's being among Torlonia's first guests. He was too much of an artist not to be pleasantly struck by what was to him the novel and fairy-like *coup-d'œil* of the long suite of reception rooms — by their noble proportions, the richness and variety of their decorations, the floods of light from chandeliers of exquisite Venetian workmanship, the profusion of flowers and shrubs on all sides, with fountains refreshing to every sense, playing amid those mimic *parterres* and groves. His soul, too, was stirred by the occasional strains of inspiring music, for the nonce a vain appeal to absent dancers. These combined influences, one and all, made his sensations for a time those of keen and unmixed enjoyment.

This pleasant state, however, did not last long. Unpalatable sights, such as are unavoidably met with in a large assembly at Rome, foreign uniforms, political opponents, political turncoats, Brutuses of yesterday turned into cardinal's courtiers of to-day, depressed his feelings, and roused his bile. "Well," thought he, to comfort himself, as a rebellious sigh would have its way, "I am not here for my own pleasure, but for hers;" and having nothing better to do, he went and made one of a large group of persons, standing in two compact rows in what he now perceived to be the principal entrance hall.

The fashionable crowd of which he formed one was composed almost exclusively of young men, most of them apparently foreigners to Italy; at least, not speaking her language, but French or English. The young Roman stood wondering what great personage was creating this expectation, when all conversation was hushed, and a general stir took place. Those who were before went further forward, those behind rose on the tips of their toes, stretched out their necks, and the short-sighted — astonishing the number of them — put up their eye-glasses, and in stepped in succession, first a stately lady with a lovely girl on each arm; then an elderly, plump dame, and a withered old one, followed by two more young fresh girls; the rear brought up by a couple between two ages; and the whole of them, young, middle-aged, and old, making a greater display of natural charms than, according to Paolo's primitive notions, was consistent with good taste. Now Paolo understood what sort of attraction it was that kept that double living wall at the entrance hall, when he heard comments, bad enough when disparaging, worse still when laudatory — comments which made him blush to the roots of his hair for those poor unconscious ladies. He hastened away, sat himself down in a corner, and fell to musing.

Little by little the rooms began to fill — the double human stream that roamed to and fro in opposite directions grew thicker, and the renewed strains of the orchestra, together with the measured beat of feet in the distance, announced that the ball had begun in earnest. Still Paolo sat musing. A slight tap of a fan awoke him, so to say; he turned round, and there before him was Miss Jones, more beautiful than

ever he had seen her, bare-shouldered, bare-armed, dazzling.

"Am I not very good to come and rouse you from your brown study? what are you thinking of?"

"Of nothing that you will care to hear," said Paolo, exchanging salutations with Mrs. Jones.

"But I do care," went on the radiant fairy; "I insist on knowing."

"I was thinking," replied Paolo, "on the beautiful moon, that is now shining without these walls."

"Were you? is there a moon to-night?"

"It was not probable you should notice it," observed Paolo.

"I did not, that's the truth."

"Does the idea of a ball abolish the rest of creation?" asked Paolo.

"Now, don't be moody and disagreeable," said the lady.

"Moody at a ball? who ever heard of such a thing? I am not such a fool," replied Paolo; "no, indeed, I intend to put on my best smiles and go and pay my homage to their eminences — I saw three somewhere."

"Nonsense! come and join us soon," and the obstruction which had brought Miss Jones to a standstill close to Paolo being removed, she disappeared with her aunt into the next room.

Miss Jones had yielded to an impulse of good-nature, in thus accosting young Mancini, for which, of course, she was afterwards called to account by Mr. Jones. It did her honour, though true it is, she had had only to stretch out her beautiful arm to reach him with her fan — only to lean over the back of one

intervening chair, to be able to converse with him. She felt grateful for his being there, grateful for his wearing "straw-coloured" gloves, and rather grateful to him for his good looks. He, on his side, was far from insensible to either her kindness or her beauty, and would assuredly have shown how warmly he felt both, but for a certain crotchet of his, which, whenever called into action, sent gentler feelings to the rightabout.

Miss Lavinia naturally wore a ball-dress, an ultra ball-dress — every one knows what that means — and Paolo, we are ashamed of him, and for him, had a special pet prejudice against low dresses, and plenty of trash ready in support of this prejudice. Now, the secret is revealed of all his shiftings and evasions, as to painting the young lady in a certain garb, and of his strangely reserved manner towards her on the day he was one of the Joneses' dinner-party. The reader is entreated to bear in mind that we describe the feelings of a young savage. Paolo was utterly ignorant of the world and its ways; Paolo had never moved in the so-called upper circles; Paolo knew not that the higher you go in the social scale, the greater this sort of exhibition. Covering their shoulders is all very well for common people, for the wives and daughters of mechanics. This ignorance, and a strong disposition to jealousy, are the only excuses which we venture to offer in extenuation of this preposterous notion of his.

Paolo's mind was troubled "like a fountain stirred, and he himself saw not the bottom of it." He felt sorely out of his place, and if Miss Jones had not expressed the desire to be shown his fresco by himself,

ten to one but he would have gone home and to bed. As it was, he wandered away in search of her, and at last found the young lady in a room, metamorphosed into a grove, and fancifully lighted by coloured lamps hanging from the branches of the trees. There was a crowd in this room, and it was suffocatingly hot. Miss Jones was dancing a quadrille, and Paolo, obliged to remain in the rear, saw only as much as the spectators in front of him would allow. No doubt of Lavinia being in her natural element — her happy smile, her lustrous eyes, her beaming countenance, told a tale of keen and intense enjoyment. Her partner, a thin, light-haired young man, with an order on his breast, whether still or in motion, never slackened in his talk, and was most complacently listened to. Now and then some of his remarks produced a fit of half-suppressed laughter, as if she greatly enjoyed the joke, whatever it was. Paolo did not relish it half as much.

The lady who was the partner of Miss Jones's *vis-à-vis*, evidently divided with Lavinia the sceptre of queen of the ball, and the admiration of the public. But far from exciting any unkind feelings, this rivalry seemed to create a friendship, and to draw the beauties towards one another. Whenever the figure of the dance caused them to meet or join hands, there was no end to wreathed smiles, and becks, and gracious whispers — all of which was very pleasant to behold.

The appearance of this second lady was very remarkable. The character of her beauty, for beauty she had, was so strange and so dissimilar to that of the European type, that it required a practised connoisseur's eye to find it out, and even then some effort to acknowledge it; but once allowed, it exercised over you

what was very like magnetic fascination. She was small and plump, but most harmoniously proportioned, had jetty black hair — uncommonly large and round-shaped, jetty black eyes, with yellow streaks, and something of the feline phosphorescence in them — a nose a very little turned up, showing more of the rosy nostrils than a fastidious observer might have desired — a wide, well-shaped mouth, with an adorable dimple at each of its corners, brought into play at every moment by a winning smile, which served to exhibit a wonderful set of little teeth of dazzling whiteness. She wore a yellow dress with bouquets of black tulle, studded with emeralds, and in her raven hair, and on her violently displayed bosom, hung strings of oriental pearls, admirably assorting with and relieving her swarthy greenish complexion and the ink of her heavy tresses. Her style of dancing was as characteristic as her appearance. It had a *laissez aller*, with occasional starts of passion, in it, accompanied by *poses* of the head, wavings of the neck and arms, and undulations of the whole person, that might be found fault with, and declared out of place in a drawing-room; but which had all the softness, peculiarity, and attractiveness of the motions of a kitten. As to her ankles and feet — and thanks to the unfashionable shortness of her gown, every one had the benefit of them — they were unanimously pronounced unrivalled — the ankle and foot of a true Andalusian.

The quadrille did come to an end at last, and then Paolo made a desperate push to join Miss Jones; but before he had elbowed half his way to her, there was the yellow lady seated by her side, and a thick wall of gentlemen of all ages surrounding and conversing

with the two belles of the evening. Paolo, however, struggled on, so as to be near enough to avail himself of any opportunity that might offer, should Lavinia really wish for his services as cicerone. He doubted much that she remembered anything about his fresco. He looked in vain for either Mr. or Mrs. Jones, and then, naturally enough, his whole attention became concentrated on the group, of which Lavinia and the yellow lady were the admired centre. They held each other's hands, and seemed on such friendly and intimate terms, that Paolo could not but take it for granted that Pentesilea, or the cardinalessa — the yellow lady was no other than the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos — Paolo had identified her at a glance — well, Paolo could not but take it for granted, that she must be an old acquaintance of Miss Jones; and if so, why had Miss Jones withheld the fact from him? The marchioness was not the sort of woman with whom he would have desired that his English pupil should form an intimacy. Not that he gave more credence than such reports usually deserve to the stories current about her ladyship; but he objected to her eccentric ways, and her habits of self-exhibition. He knew also, from what Clelia and Salvator said, that, if kind and generous, the marchioness was, beyond all allowable limits, wilful, thoughtless, and childish.

While Paolo was lost in disagreeable speculations, the music struck up again, couples took their places, and the waltz began. This time Lavinia's partner was remarkably tall, handsome, prepossessing in appearance, and, as a dancer, quite a match for the young lady. It was really a pleasure to watch the two elegant forms flying rapidly round the room, with the ease and light-

ness of thistle-down driven by a gentle breeze — a pleasure, that is, to all but Paolo. To him, on the contrary, the sight was gall and wormwood. Probably many another in his situation, even though more scantily gifted than our Roman with originality, might object to seeing the woman he loves twirling round a room in the arms of a fine fellow, her cheeks so close to his cheeks that their breaths must mingle, a stray curl of her hair perhaps brushing his lips, not to mention other aggravating circumstances. But in this, as in all other matters, tastes differ, no doubt; and who will venture on the experiment of accounting for tastes? That of Paolo was, however, decidedly against this kind of sport; and had he had within his reach the inventor of the waltz, he would have made an example of him, for the guidance of other inventors. As it was, he had nothing for it but to fulminate curses — deep not loud — against him, as he stood with eyes riveted on the handsome pair, in mortal apprehension lest not only faces but lips might touch. One must be in love and jealous, to be pursued by any such ridiculous fears.

After the climax of the waltz, which in sight and sound resembles a humming-top, the music stopped, and Lavinia's cavalier reconducted her to a seat, thanked her, bowed low, and departed, and with him Paolo's incubus. He made a desperate rush forward and reached Miss Jones's side.

"Here you are at last," she said, panting for breath, and passing her cobweb handkerchief furtively over her face. "How very hot it is! shall I ever be cool again! Oh, my poor gloves, they are not fit to be seen."

"You had better not dance any more," said Paolo,

innocently, "but amuse yourself with walking through the rooms."

"Not dance any more!" exclaimed the beauty, loudly, and with a superb toss of her head. "Look," and she held up her tablets, "it is full; I am engaged for every dance."

Paolo involuntarily recoiled. The tones, gestures, looks were those of a person drunk — drunk with excitement. Her countenance reminded him of that of a Bacchante he had copied over and over again while he was at the drawing academy, and which had haunted him day and night at the time. He listened, struck dumb and torpid as one in a dream. The return of the yellow lady, and other strangers, who clustered round Miss Jones, roused him from his trance; he bowed and retired. In doing so, he met Mr. and Mrs. Jones coming in search of their niece. Mrs. Jones stopped him, asking if he were ill, he looked so pale.

"Nothing but the heat," answered Paolo.

The lady complained of heat likewise, and they parted.

"Poor fool that thou art!" thought Paolo to himself, as he elbowed his way out of the crowd, "she thinks no more of thee or thy fresco than of the first pair of shoes she ever wore. She thinks of dancing, and she is right. For what do people come to a ball if not for dancing? The greater ass to be here, I who do not dance. If ever —"

The thread of his thoughts or resolves was here violently snapped by a sharp touch on his shoulder. He turned, and found himself face to face with the so-styled *Du Genre*, his French friend and fellow painter.

"Ah, ah! you are humanizing yourself at last," said the Frenchman.

"Am I?" asked Paolo: "my opinion is that I am brutifying myself."

"Always caustic," observed Du Genre. "Eh bien! how goes it with the ideal?"

"Stifled under these mountains of matter."

"Farceur! it is a charming fête: what dresses! what women!"

"The dresses are faded, the women puppets, the fête a bedlam. I protest that any one who is pleased with what he sees here is either crazy, or a student of the nude."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Du Genre, "I see now where the shoe pinches, you puritan. You would have young ladies with beautiful transparent skins put them under lock and key."

"And where would be the harm, if they did?" returned Paolo. "Ought a woman of flesh and blood to be exhibited like a statue or a picture, that we may admire the delicacy of that curve, or the fine effect of that tint?"

"And the public, barbarian — the public — are they not to be considered?"

"Ah! the public," sneered Paolo. "Yes, you are right, — I forgot the claims of society. You have converted me. Good night." And he hurried away, repeating to himself, "In fact, why should the public not have their part? It is the public that awards the prizes, therefore it is but just and fair the public should have the means of judging. Fie on husbands and lovers. What right have they to confiscate the share of the public? Down with all such monopoly; little fear of

it, after all. As far as I can see, love seems to be a very accommodating affair. But mine is not. Mine is the love of a miser. I must have my treasure all to myself — down to the uttermost farthing. I am jealous of the very air surrounding her. Only to see her dance with another made me suffer martyrdom. Why am I thus? Why am I not like others? Am I wrong, or mad, or what? At all events, I have had enough of balls, and of yellow gloves, too," and so thinking, he tore them off, and sent what was now very unlike a pair of ball gloves, spinning along the marble hall.

CHAPTER XXI.

Thornton tells a Tale.

THE clocks of the Eternal City were tolling twelve as the heated young man issued into the street, and the slow strokes fell on the still night like a solemn warning. The moon was riding high in the unclouded sky, the air was cool and pleasant to fevered brows, the silence and solitude sweet to a swelling, overcharged heart. As Paolo walked along, his excitement insensibly subsided under the soothing influences of the hour, and dwindled into a profound discouragement, into one of those heavy, poignant, supreme depressions, not unfrequently the lot of passionate natures, and under the tyranny of which life seems an unbearable burden. In this dejected humour, he reached Via Babuino. A tall shadow was flitting to and fro before the house in which Paolo lived. It was Thornton.

"I knew you would not be late," said the Englishman, "and so I have been on the look out for you. Is

it the light of the moon which makes you look so pale, or have you seen a ghost?"

"The one and the other," returned Paolo; "but spare me just now."

"I am not the one to bruise the broken reed," muttered Thornton. "Paolo, I may have used the goad to make my friend turn from a precipice; but once he has taken the plunge, and lies wounded, I would handle him as tenderly as a babe. All affliction is sacred to me." Then Thornton added, in a lighter tone, "Come now to my room, and let us have a chat and a glass of punch."

"Thank you," said Paolo, "I am neither inclined to talk nor drink. I will go to bed."

"To toss about, and fret, and bite your pillows to stifle your groans. I have known such nights. No, Paolo; come with me; we shall not talk. Come, my son."

A father could not have said "my son" more tenderly. Every feature in the speaker's fine countenance was expressive of gentle and considerate sympathy. The young Roman, easily conquered, followed to his friend's apartment, and once in the familiar room, stretched himself out on a sofa, while Thornton, before a table on which was the ready prepared punch, applied a lighted match to the spirits, and stood there stirring and exciting the blue flames to greater and more wizard activity.

"An image of that short fever yclept life," said Thornton, gravely, as the last forked, fiery tongue, after much wavering, flickering, paling, at length died out.

"It might be so full and happy, though!" sighed Paolo.

"Full, — yes, to a certain extent, if we were wise," said the Englishman; "but happy, I much doubt. Happiness is less an affair of circumstances than of temperament. Many are happy with the best reasons for being quite the contrary, and *vice versâ*. There are in the world, luckily, but a very limited number to whom nature has forgotten to give the buffers and soothers with which the majority are provided to protect them against too rough collisions. Hence the disagreeable shocks this minority of ill-constituted mortals receive, where the others receive none, or perhaps even agreeable impressions. The former are like swimmers against the current, or like guests at a banquet whose stomachs are at fault with the viands before them. Such are never satisfied with an approximation, but like Balzac's Flemish alchymist, pursue that which they can never reach — the absolute, in politics, in morals, in art, in love, in everything. For such as these happiness is out of the question; quiet and peace they may enjoy, so long as they keep out of the paths of the world. This is thy lot and mine, my poor friend."

"I revolt against it, then!" cried Paolo; "I scorn your peace and quiet; I will and must be happy. A man worthy the name of a man ought not to mope and despond when he can act. I know what hurt me, and no later than to-day she shall hear it from me."

"Hear what, my poor boy? that her dancing with another drives Paolo Mancini frantic, and that therefore she must give it up? Even if she would, she could not. Her uncle and aunt, her friends, the world, would misconstrue the renunciation. Hear that her ball-dress

is objectionable in your eyes? If she would, she could not alter the style of it. It is the *costume de rigueur* on such occasions; or hear that you find fault with her looking pleased and excited at the admiration she inspires? Don't find fault with *her*; find fault with human nature, or rather with yourself. You cannot make her responsible for your peculiar manner of seeing and feeling."

"You lay your finger on each of my wounds," said Paolo, in surprise; "yon read my heart as if it were an open book."

"I once knew a young man who passed through similar phases, and who described his sensation to me," explained Mortimer. "Youth, fortune, good looks, a kindly disposition, great moderation of desires — he had all, you would have said, which ought by right to secure happiness. But he had none of those inestimable softeners which, as I said before, ward off through life all violent concussions or falls. The world disagreed with that youth, and he with the world. He was wise enough to turn his back upon it, and seek contentment in the solitude of a country life. Here he had a dream. He dreamt of a girl as lovely as the roses she tended in her garden, as true as the nature which encircled her, as ignorant of the world and its ways as if no such thing existed. Indeed, they did not as yet exist for her. Here I am safe, thought the imprudent, youthful sage; and he let his heart grow to her, let every hope and wish coil round her. The dream lasted for a twelvemonth. It vanished at a county ball — her first ball."

Mortimer, half choked with emotion, swallowed his

glass of punch almost at a gulp, and after a little he went on, —

“He saw her leaning on strangers’ arms, complacently listening to and smiling upon strangers, forgetful of everything, himself included, in the excitement of the moment. A young officer, the son of a nobleman, paid her particular attention, and to see the deference and eagerness with which she marked her sense of the honour, one would have said she had as much faith in the saving grace of the peerage as in that of the Bible. My friend felt as you felt not long ago. That terrible rival, from which he had thought himself secure with her, the world, on a sudden stood between him and her — nay, supplanted him. His whole moral being was shaken to its foundations. She did not notice his agitated looks; she had no eyes but for the admiration bestowed upon her. The young man thought to himself as you did at the ball — said as you did at the ball — said as you did just now, ‘This shall not be again; I will remonstrate with her.’ But when he tried to do this, she did not understand him, and asked, ‘What have I done?’ This question closed his mouth. In fact, what had she done but indulge in an amusement pronounced innocent by society, and as such entered into by most respectable ladies, both married and unmarried. What had she done, poor child, but acknowledge and be flattered by the condescension of one of those, the world, her world, recognizes as its betters? What right had he to visit on her unoffending head what, after all, was nothing but the sin of his own faulty organization? He felt ashamed of himself, and held his peace.”

Thornton drained his glass again, and then proceeded with increased animation, —

“A ball, like a misfortune, never comes alone. This one was to be followed by races, then dinners, and the inevitable complement of races and dinners — more dancing. Well, my young fool was fool enough to imagine that she might make him a sacrifice of this new ball, and he wrote accordingly. The answer was, that his request could not be complied with. She was engaged to go, and what would the world say if she did not? And go she did. He saw her go in with his own eyes. It is but fair to say, that the young lady was on a visit to an aunt, who doted on all kinds of gay crowds, doted also on those ornaments of county-town ball-rooms, officers — yes, the town had the blessing of a garrison. The aunt hated a quiet evening at home — she was born for society, she said. We fools call that species of woman worldly, but the wise, whose company she so sedulously grappled at, spoke of her as a pleasant, companionable woman.

“Well, was I to be laid on the rack again? Yes; I—” continued Mortimer, as Paolo suddenly sat bolt upright with amazement — “yes, it is the follies and sins of my own youth, that I am relating to you. Do what I would, I could no longer endure the boiling hell of my own feelings. I could no more change her nature than my own. I could spoil her life, as well as mine; that was all I could do. Better part. I wrote her a letter, a long letter. Every syllable that I penned drew blood from my heart. What I said, I don’t know; not a word in wrath, many in love, and humility, and self-accusation. I laid bare before her every

fold of my inner being, as fully and unreservedly as if I had been before my God. I entreated, implored her pardon, humbly and earnestly. This letter I sent to her from London. Ten days after that, I was in New York. I have never since set foot in England again."

"It was an extreme resolution to come to," observed Paolo. "And she, what did she say or do?"

"Of that I am ignorant. From that time to this, I have never heard of or from her. No one had my address but my solicitors, and I left instructions with them to communicate with me solely on business, and to destroy any letters that might be sent to them for me."

"That was hard — seems almost cruel. I am sure she wrote, and hoped on for long; how do you know but that your unrelenting silence broke her heart?"

"Don't say I broke her heart," burst forth Mortimer, with frightful vehemence; "don't say it, or you will drive me mad. Say that I was right; that what I did was best for her; that I could not have done otherwise; or, better still, say that women never break their hearts, so long as there exist such things as fashions, lordlings, and balls."

Mortimer shook from head to foot as he spoke, and his fine countenance grew haggard and livid.

Startled, nay, almost scared, by this passionate outburst of feeling, so unlike his friend's constant habit of self-control, which amounted in general to passiveness, Paolo remained silently watching Thornton, as he walked the room backwards and forwards, quiet enough now. The noble form grew gradually indistinct, until it completely vanished from eyes closed in slumber.

Paolo spent the best part of the following morning in meditating on the shape in which to clothe the strictures he intended to offer to Miss Lavinia, on the subject of balls, partners, &c. It was a difficult problem he had set himself — to find words exempt at the same time from vagueness, quite unmistakeable in meaning, and yet measured in so nice a balance that they could give no offence. But not for this was there any wavering in his resolves; and had there been, Mortimer's strange revelations would have supplied an additional spur. "God forbid," thought the young lover, "that by any fault of omission on my side, things should come to a like pass between her and me. I owe it to her, not less than to myself, to be candid and open." We don't know if he solved the problem to his satisfaction; certain it is, that his ability and industry were defeated by an unforeseen circumstance.

Mrs. Jones, who had gone to the ball feeling far from well, was suddenly taken ill on her return home. Her attack of asthma was so unusually violent, that every one near her apprehended immediate suffocation. Physicians were called in one after the other, and all the resources of science evoked, with, for a time, but little result. Towards morning, however, she was somewhat relieved, but, from the state of exhaustion, still considered in danger. Paolo was told this from the lips of Miss Lavinia herself, when he called at Palazzo Morlacchi, and, oh! with what agony of look, what wringing of hands, and floods of tears! How could he have lectured her at such a moment? besides, he had no time, for poor Lavinia was far too impatient to return to the side of the sick bed, to linger one unnecessary second with any one; and had she done

so, Paolo, to tell the truth, was far more likely to have fallen at her feet in a transport of pity and admiration, than to have sermonized her. The light in which he now saw her, banished for the time all disagreeable shades. A heart full of such an argosy of affection was the best security against any momentary flights of the head. An appeal to that heart was sure, at any time, to elicit all the good in it. So reasoned Paolo.

CHAPTER XXII.

Miss Lavinia's Diary.

"DEAR LADY AUGUSTA,

"Since my last, I have had a great terror, and a great joy, and to whom but you, dearest of friends, can I confide my joys and sorrows, with entire certainty of their being shared and sympathized with? The night before last, on our return from a ball at Torlonia's, aunt was taken ill, frightfully ill, threatened with suffocation: actually black in the face, and with scarcely any pulse. Oh! the horror of those hours! How is it that one's heart does not break with such suffering? Thank God — oh! thank God, I can now speak of it as past. Since yesterday, the improvement has been so rapid and steady, that the physicians themselves are surprised, and to-morrow, if the weather be fine, she is to be permitted to take a drive on the Pincio. I feel so light-hearted, so happy, that I can scarcely sit still to write. I feel a longing to get up, and dance by myself. What a child I am, after all!

"Now that the danger is over — yes, really over — I can remember what went before, and which, even

while it was being played out, I was thinking I should relate to you; it is so delightful to have some one that likes to hear all one has to tell about oneself. Well, but I am not going to write about the ball; no, you have had a surfeit of such things; but, about — about a charming conquest I have made. ‘Oh! the fickle monkey,’ I hear you say, wearing your gravest look; ‘a conquest after —’ Never fear; this victory will give umbrage to no one, for my conquest is only a — woman. But *such* a woman! dark as night, restless as quick-silver, passionate, like the thorough creole she is, fond of riding, driving, shooting, dancing, singing, and doing each to perfection; and such an adorable way of dressing into the bargain; in short, the very companion for me. She introduced herself — I ought to say declared her love at first sight, so warm and affectionate was the language of her introduction. She pronounced me a nonsuch of beauty, begged my friendship, brought half Rome, I believe, to my shrine, would only dance in the quadrille where I danced, and remained by my side till the end of the ball; in a word, there could not be a more ardent courtship from man to woman, than that of this fascinating woman to me; and I, also, have taken an immense fancy to her. I have told you everything I know of my beauty, except her name. Here it is: Juanita Florez Virginia, Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos. Hers is one of the oldest families in Cuba. Her husband, moreover, is a Grandee of Old Spain, and ambassador somewhere, and his younger brother, Conde de la Terra, *chaperons* her. She called on us the day after the ball, as she had promised, but aunt was at the worst, and I could only stay a few instants with her. Uncle was at home, and Count Fortiguerra with him.

Mr. Jones, I could see, was not sorry, and, sooth to say, no more was I, that the first person she met in our house, should be a nobleman. If her servants came once during that day to inquire for aunt, I am positive they came twenty times. She called herself again yesterday, and is to be here to-day. We are all to go and spend a day at Villa Torralba, where she resides, to get acquainted with one another, as the marchioness says. The marchioness! she won't hear of my giving her any title, but insists on my calling her Juanita. She is all impatience to show me her villa, her grounds, her horses, her theatre (it seems she has got one), and to have me quite to herself, that is her own expression.

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“Fully eleven days since I scribbled the above, and I have not had one spare hour, not a spare minute, to devote to my diary. No heroine of a fashionable novel in the height of the season was ever more beleaguered with engagements than I have been during these eleven days. Life is a race, indeed, under the leadership of this fiery creole. A whirlwind, a hurriance, are the only appropriate similes for her activity of mind and body. She can ride or drive for hours, pay a dozen visits, entertain some thirty guests at dinner, and dance till morning, without betraying the least fatigue, and without any flagging of her spirits. Her nerves must be what people call iron nerves. That she has an iron wrist, I for one can vouch, as any one can who has seen her driving her pair of wonderful ponies — regular little demons — or riding Achmet, her Arab, who is as fiery and untameable as herself. We rush along at the rate of a mail-train behind its time, and I own that I do occasionally find it a little too much. Her love for me

has become a sort of *furore*. Since I sang to her, Grisi, Alboni, and Jenny Lind, my lovely Spaniard says, are not worthy to unlatch my shoes. She will grant me neither peace nor truce, she protests, until I promise to sing in the opera which she means to give at her theatre. I do not think I shall comply; the idea of being on any stage and acting before an audience, however private the one and select the other, has something in it very repugnant to my feelings, and you know I am no prude. However we shall see. Señora Juanita, moreover, declares she cannot live without me, and it would seem so, for we are almost always together. We have had a morning concert, and dined twice at Villa Torralba. Aunt is so nearly well that she came to dinner, but drove home early in the evening. They dined with us on Monday. *They* stands for the marchioness and the Conde; and I leave it to your imagination to decide on what were the amount of Mr. Jones's exertions to secure the finest of fine people to meet them. Count Fortiguerra figured at the head of the list. By the by, Juanita has taken a great fancy to him. On Tuesday I went with her and uncle to Lady Hamilton's tea, on Wednesday to Princess Sgrozanoff's *soirée dansante*, on Thursday to Marchesa Saffioli's *conversazione*, on Friday to an *Accademia d'Improvvisazione*, on Saturday to the ball at the French Embassy. I believe every foreigner or native of any note have been introduced to me. I am fast becoming the rage here, and no wonder, when my Juanita, who evidently gives or takes away one's right to be considered fashionable and one of the *beau monde*, does nothing but rave of my perfections to every creature she sees.

* * * * *

"Another week gone — really, no time to breathe. But I must tell you about our races, or rather my races. You must know that from the first moment of our becoming acquainted, she thought of getting up some races in imitation of our English ones. She dotes on bull-fights, and would have managed to have had one a month ago, but, as she confided to me, the Pope dissuaded her; so, as I said, as soon as she knew me, she determined to have races *à l'Anglaise* in my honour; and they took place yesterday, and were the *bonne bouche* of all our gaieties. The place of rendezvous was the tomb of Cecilia Metella, and two hundred persons congregated there by special invitation; the number of those present non-invited was legion. Almost all of us were in red, we ladies in red jackets, and the men in red coats. The marchioness generally rides and drives in a red jacket, and I have had one made off her pattern, and it suits me uncommonly well. We had only gentlemen riders. There were twenty-one English, a Russian or two, and one Roman — not a Roman, I believe, but at all events an Italian — that very Prince of Rocca-Ginestra, whose turn-out I so much admired some time ago, and about whom Signor Mancini made such a fuss. The whole thing went off capitally, and but for the horses, poor specimens in general, one might have imagined oneself on an English raceground. There was the same eating, drinking, and flirting in the carriages, the same fire of small talk and wit, the same mountebanks striving for money; everything but the horses — oh, yes, and but the sky — was like a scene in our dear country. The greater number of the invited went afterwards to Villa Torralba, and then we danced, and supped, and danced again, till dawn of the

next morning. It was hard work for the queen of the fête, Lavinia Jones, for my royalty of an hour entailed presentations and compliments without end — such compliments! we English don't shine in that line: it was enough to have worn out the strongest Samson in petticoats. Among the most enthusiastic of my subjects were uncle and Count Fortiguerra, both unmistakeably tipsy.

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"A disagreeable complication. I had written so far yesterday, when my Spanish Will-o'-the-wisp came playing round me, and whisked me away to Villa Torralba. I stipulated for a quiet day, and a comparatively quiet day we had — a drive of two hours, and an hour's practising in the shooting-gallery. *Nota Bene* — I am fast becoming an excellent pistol-shot. The rest of the day was spent indoors, most of it in the theatre. A diminutive young man, all in black like a doctor or clergyman, and a strikingly handsome girl, were superintending the rehearsal of the choruses. The girl, called Clelia, and only a dressmaker, went through her task with a calm dignity which might have suited an empress; the small man in black, on the contrary, did his part with a zest and a funny *bonhomie*, which sent every one present, even the queenly girl herself, into fits of laughter. He is a scene-painter of tolerable repute, and Clelia is his affianced bride. I have never mentioned my rivals in the marchioness's love — her dogs. She has some of every kind in the world, I believe, and attends to them just as if they were babies; gets frightened at their least indisposition; in short, pets them more than any reasonable woman would or should do. One of these favourites was ailing, and so away

went the marchioness every five minutes to visit the interesting patient. I don't know what possessed me, but during one of these absences, I asked the droll little painter if he knew Signor Mancini. '*Altro!* Signor Mancini was like a brother to him,' was the answer, his eyes and those of his handsome companion brightening marvellously at the sound of the name; and hereupon followed a glowing panegyric of Signor Paolo, as artist, friend, and man. Clelia added her warm assent to every word. Juanita, happening to return while the little man was still declaiming on this subject, with her usual inquisitiveness insisted on being told how I came to know Signor Paolo, what he was like, what was his profession, &c. &c. And I, yielding, I hope, less to the promptings of *amour-propre* than to a wish to do Signor Paolo a service by interesting a person of the marchioness's rank and wealth in his behalf, told her how kindly he had directed me in my painting, and also — here is what I think was perhaps unwise — of the portrait he had taken of me, and which was all but finished. No sooner had I said this, than impetuous Juanita declared she must and would see my picture at once, and that she would have her own taken; and was for setting off immediately to have her first sitting. You may imagine my dismay, knowing Signor Mancini's ways so well. It was all I could do to persuade her to delay her visit to the studio in Via Frattina, by making her remember the hour of the day, and how much too late it would be by the time we reached Rome. So, at last, she gave up the point, and the visit is to take place to-day.

"The truth is, I wanted a little time to consider whether I had not better write and prepare him for

this call, and urge him to comply with the marchioness's request, or whether I would trust to the chapter of accidents. Upon reflection, I think this will be my best course. Signor Paolo is very shy, and at this moment I have more reliance on his shyness than on his goodwill. The great point is to get at him, and if he were forewarned, he is just the man to shut himself up in that atelier of his, and be stone deaf to bell and knocker. You wonder at *my* having any such anticipation, don't you? Ah! but Signor Paolo is angry with me, and not quite without cause. I will not pretend not to be aware that I have treated him rather cavalierly; at least, apparently so, during my last gaieties. He called twice — once in the morning, just as I was going to a concert at Villa Torralba, and again one evening, at the very moment I was getting into the carriage to go to a ball. Of course, he looked disappointed and vexed. The worst of the business is, that on both occasions, wishing to console him, I made an appointment for a sitting on the morrow, and I *was* very naughty — I kept neither. He has never been near me since. The last time I saw him was the day of the races; it was in the Corso, and I was in the marchioness's barouche, dressed in my red jacket. I caught his eye, and felt that I coloured; I am sure I don't know why, for, after all, there is no sin in wearing scarlet — red shawls are common enough; however, he looked as black as thunder as he turned away.

* * * * *

“What an inexplicable riddle the human heart is! we cannot even read and understand our own; for, do we not often, under some of its momentary impulses, feel, act, speak, in a way, which, had it been pro-

phesied to us but an hour before, we should have laughed at, and spurned the notion of with indignation? I remember hearing an author of some fame one day decline all compliments about his books, affirming that not he, but a *homunculus* within him, had written them, always without his knowledge, not unfrequently against his will. I suppose I have some such sort of an imp, a *fæminula*, for whose sayings and doings I, the woman, am not responsible. What is all this preamble to lead to? you ask. To preparing you, my dear, for something very extraordinary. But I must begin at the beginning.

We went yesterday, Juanita and I, as we had agreed, to Signor Mancini's studio. He was there, not, as usual, painting, but writing. I have no words to tell you how his altered appearance shocked me; ghastly pale, with sunken cheeks, blood-shot eyes, he was the mere shadow of his former self. 'Would he be so kind,' I asked, 'as to allow my friend, the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos, to see my portrait?' and glancing round, to see where it was, fancy my surprise at discovering that all the easels were vacant, and what appeared to be a roll of canvas in a corner of the room. A flush spread over his face as he stammered out that my portrait had met with an accident, had fallen, in fact, and been so injured that he had sent it to have the canvas repaired. I saw perfectly well that he was telling a fib, but why? I observed aloud, while I silently wondered what had really become of my picture, that I particularly regretted the circumstance, as my friend, had she been satisfied with my likeness, as I was certain she would have been, had determined to ask him to take one of her, if his occupation — I was

going to add, would permit, but he gave me no time, saying hurriedly, that being on the eve of leaving Rome for change of air, he could make no engagements of any sort for the present. This was principally addressed to the marchioness, for he avoided looking at me as much as he decently could. I here remarked, that I hoped he was not going farther than Tivoli, or Frascati. 'Exactly,' answered he; 'to Tivoli, or Frascati, or — I have not made up my mind as to where yet.' 'Not to be away long?' I hoped. 'Oh, no! not long; for a little while.' Again I felt sure that he was deceiving me, and a mortal uneasiness lest he should be going away for ever stole over me. All at once I felt what it would be to me if I lost him. I had been a wretched fool, a wicked fool. I had neglected him, the best, the truest, the most devoted, because — I can't write it, it is too mean. My whole soul was clinging to him with the energy of despair, and yet, there I must stand, and chatter words of course. I did love him, yes, I did; and he was leaving me! I followed the marchioness downstairs with some wild idea of telling her everything and going back to him. I had actually reached the carriage, but it would not do. I told her I had dropped one of my bracelets, and, without waiting for any answer, I rushed up the stairs again into the studio. He had been pacing the room, and had his back to the door as I lifted the latch. When he saw me, he stood transfixed. I went up to him, and said, —

"I have but a minute; what have you done with my picture?"

"Tore it to pieces with my own hands."

"And where are you going?"

“‘To Paris.’

“‘When do you start?’

“‘This evening at eight o’clock.’

“‘You shall not go.’

“‘I shall, and will.’

“‘If you are a man, you will not desert — those who love you.’

“‘Who loves me?’

“‘I do; yes, with all my heart. Will you go or stay?’

“He hesitated a second, then said, —

“‘I stay.’

“I held out my hand; he fell at my feet, pressed it to his heart — to his lips — and then I ran away.

“And now to explain my preamble, and I have done. I suppose it to be in human nature, that the value we set on anything increases with the chances of its being lost, and diminishes with those of its being restored to us. What is very certain is, that yesterday I thought in the heat of pursuit no sacrifice too great to save me from a threatened loss, and to-day — shall I say it or not? — to-day, after four and twenty hours of security, I look back upon the price I paid for my possession, not exactly with regret, but with a wonder that is very akin to regret. Who can fathom this mystery for me? who explain this contradiction? Is it but the momentary reaction which follows a fit of fever, or am I influenced, unknown to myself, by the bitter remarks of the marchioness, who took quite an aversion to him? I know it is one of my faults to attach an undue weight to the opinion of others. I must try and correct myself of this; it will otherwise prove a bar to any steadiness of purpose.

"I have made another observation as to myself and Signor Paolo, one which greatly puzzles me. His power over me is great; too great when he is present, too little when out of sight. I really believe he magnetizes me. Laugh if you like, but I do think so. I am full of other fancies and misgivings; he has lately grown so unmanageable; it is true I have given him cause of offence. I neglected, indeed, slighted him. I will be on my good behaviour for the future. It is partly his fault also. Why can't he go into society, and dance, and do like the rest of the world? then we should meet oftener, and he would be better satisfied, and so should I. Ah, me! I feel thunder in the air; the storm will burst when he hears that I am going to be one of the performers in the marchioness's theatricals, and, worse still, that I am to sing with his *bête noire*, the Prince of Rocca Ginestra. The marchioness, supported by uncle and even aunt, pressed me so hard on that unlucky day of the races, that they wrenched from me a promise — an unwilling promise, I declare. To draw back now is perfectly out of the question. What reason could I give, as I dare not give the real ones? I must trust a good deal to lucky chances, and a little to dissimulation. I begin to wish I had never come to Rome; he is *capable* of killing me, he is indeed. A famous *dénoûment* for a novel. Few men in real life love enough for the attempt. You will abuse me for being romantic, but there is something flattering in being loved so ferociously."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A Stormy Truce.

THE *entente cordiale* which followed the treaty of peace concluded between Paolo and Miss Jones was, as may be easily foreseen, but of short duration. As but too often happens in treaties involving far greater interests, and most carefully worded, each of our contracting powers had a particular *bonâ fide* interpretation of their tacit agreement, at perfect variance and clashing with the interpretation of the other. Rare it is, indeed, that, under such circumstances, what was to cement peace should not beget war. At any rate, it was a consequence which did not fail on the present occasion. Let us, for the sake of a clear understanding of the *casus belli*, define, as concisely as possible, the two conflicting versions of the treaty, and the rival pretensions to which it gave birth.

To make amends to Signor Paolo for her late neglect, and to regulate her behaviour towards him for the future, so as not to afford him a pretext for any complaint of want of proper attention on her part; such and no other was to be, would Miss Jones have explained, had she been called on to do so, the practical and tangible result of her impetuous seeking after a reconciliation. Therefore, as long as she allowed of his visits at her own house, which she conscientiously did on certain fixed days and hours, and showed him a friendly and smiling countenance, Lavinia believed herself, with the best faith, to be within the letter and spirit of her compact. Of altering her general mode of life in what it might displease him, she had never dreamed, and could

not dream, ignorant as she was as to how that fashion of life offended him.

But far wider and more comprehensive was Signor Paolo's view of their convention. His construction of it was, that Miss Jones, by suing for peace, had naturally engaged herself to satisfy *all* the exigencies — reasonable in his eyes — of an accepted suitor, and a non-compliance with which had been the cause of the rupture between them; for, argued Paolo, if she loves me — and love me she does, or she would certainly not have said that she did — if she loves me, then it must be a real pleasure for her to humour me in notions, which, after all, go far to prove the depth and exclusiveness of my love. My ways may seem peculiar to her; but she knew them, and if, knowing them, she nevertheless sought me, what could she mean but that she takes me such as I am, good, bad, or indifferent?

As the reader sees, Paolo was a long way off from his lyrical rhapsodies and ecstatic feelings of a few weeks ago, when to kiss the spot hallowed by the soles of her feet had sufficed to content him. He was less discreet now, less trustful; but at that period she was a goddess, at this, only a woman. How so? That great wizard, suffering, had brought about the transformation. Through sleepless nights with racking brain, through mad longings for death, and curses on his aching heart, a knowledge of reality had grown fast, and enlightened even dreamy Paolo; and he came forth from the fiery ordeal with bruised body and soul, minus the freshest leaf of his garland of illusions, plus a shred from experience, that hypocrite whose real name is distrust.

The interrupted drawing lessons were then resumed

twice a week, but the drawing-master had little joy of them. Miss Jones, in the full conviction that she was fulfilling every duty towards Paolo, pursued with a light heart her course of gaiety; nay, as every day was marked by a new acquaintance, she fluttered more wildly from one dissipation to another. She was never even conscious of the interruptions and curtailments of the time destined for Paolo. Scarcely had he ever her undivided attention; it was either a visitor in the drawing-room, whom she must run and see, or the dress-maker, or the singing-master, or a note to answer. Ah! these notes — these scented, varicoloured, fantastically folded notes — how abhorrent they were to Paolo: they proved the bane of his life. Innocent as most of them were of any meaning — those which had some conveying no more interesting intelligence than the address of a milliner, the lines quoted at last night's ball from Tennyson, or the introducing a sonata or song to the belle of the moment; poetry and music alike fated to remain unread, unplayed, unsung, from the want of time — innocent, we say, as these notes were, they had each and all a perfume of love about them which furiously irritated the nerves of the young Roman.

Worse still when master and pupil had a quiet hour, and Lavinia told how her time had been taken up in the interval between one lesson and the other, and expatiated on the topics filling her thoughts — the ball that had been, and the one that was to be, at which H. M. Lewis of Bavaria was expected to be present; her dress, and the notice and admiration it excited; the marked attention paid her by his Grace, or his Excellency, and so on. She did not perceive, nor care to perceive, what gall and worm-wood all this was to

Paolo. Once entered on the chapter of gratified vanity, the cleverest and kindest-hearted of girls can prove herself blind and cruel. No wonder that to Paolo, one of the uninitiated, such a life of self-exhibition as was here detailed to him, such a reckless pursuit of excitement, such utter dethronement of the spiritual part of our nature, should seem something empty, frivolous, absurd; more suited to a peacock, whose business is the display of its tail, than to a rational, responsible creature, endowed with heart and mind, and an immortal soul.

And Paolo said this one day, said it plainly and bluntly. The young lady winced greatly, and accused him of grudging her the natural amusements of her age. Not at all, affirmed the lover; he objected not to the glass of wine, but the half-dozen bottles, which brought forth drunkenness. "Was life a polka," he asked, "that we should go through it dancing?" "Was life a funeral," retorted she, "that we ought to walk through it mourning?"

"Far from it," was the reply, "but life has duties the fulfilment of which involves responsibilities, and ought therefore to be reflected on seriously."

"I should like to know what great good you are doing with your gravity?" asked Miss Jones.

"Very little, truly, but at all events I labour, and earn my daily bread, as a poor man ought to do, striving to keep myself in the right frame of mind and body for the day that will come, when I shall find more genial and earnest employment in behalf of my country."

After a moment's pause, Lavinia said, —

"Men have left us women nothing in the way of

work but the honour of mending our husband's and children's stockings. When my time comes, I hope I shall perform that duty as well as my neighbours. In the meanwhile I shall amuse myself, seeing that I commit no crime in so doing. I have no genius for reforming the world; I have no country to regenerate."

"Lucky that you have not," returned Paolo, bitterly; "it is admirable in you to sneer at the most sacred feelings — feelings you ought to honour — you, born in a free land."

Lavinia's heart smote her; she tried to apologize, and burst into tears. Paolo could not bear to see her cry, and in his turn implored forgiveness for his harshness. A few kind words on both sides once more patched up a truce, which lasted as long as it could.

The Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos was the lovers' next apple of discord. Paolo declared his disapproval of Lavinia's intimacy with her ladyship in particularly strong terms. Lavinia defended her friend with a warmth worthy a better cause.

The marchioness objectionable? A person must be difficult to satisfy indeed, who thought so. Nobody did. Nobody took amiss the marquis's indefinite absence on his foreign embassy, or the marked assiduities of this or that nobleman. Nobody had ever thought twice about a report of a ghost — the ghost of poor Manuelito, said the servants at Villa Torralba — which had haunted the gardens for some nights, and which somebody, so it was said, had watched and caught, and discovered to be a prince, who, in a state of somnambulism, had mistaken the Villa Torralba for his palace in Piazza What's-its-name. Nobody had ever thought of impeaching the marchioness's reputation on such pre-

posterous grounds. Had not the marchioness pedigree and money enough to be above suspicion or objection? Cardinals called at her house; the *crème de la crème*, both foreign and indigenous, flocked to her dinners and parties; the most *comme il faut* persons declared themselves honoured by her notice. Truth to say, this took place on the Continent, and morals are so loose on the Continent, in Italy especially, and in Rome in a superlative degree. There is but one country in the world, which shall not be named, where you may be as noble as the Emperor of China, as rich as Cræsus, as splendid as Sardanapalus, but if you have a spot as large as a pin, the shadow of a blemish on your propriety, nobody will look your way, not even a dog will offer you its paw. But at Rome! —

And yet Paolo objected to her. Lavinia asked innocently what could Signor Paolo see to find fault with in the marchioness, unless it was her title? She knew he disliked titles. Paolo did not care whether the lady had one or not; he objected to her eccentric and unfeminine habits, to her driving and shooting, to her manners, to her rage for exhibiting herself in every haunt of dissipation. A woman who courted public attention as the marchioness did, was no fit companion for a young and modest girl.

Miss Jones treated these notions with the most superb disdain. They were the notions of a savage, and not those of a civilized being. If such ways were those of civilized life, Paolo gloried in being a savage.

"Are women born actresses," cried the irate young man, "that they must be for ever parading on the boards of a stage, a spectacle for any public?"

"Are women born nuns and Sisters of Charity,"

cried Lavinia, "that they must cut their hair, wear sackcloth, and bury themselves alive?"

"It would fare better with many of them if they did," quoth the Roman; "if they did no good, they would do no harm, at least."

"That is a matter of opinion; for my part, I find the world very well as it is, and I have no mind to renounce it."

"You renounce me, then?" prompt as lightning was the answer; "I must be your world or nothing."

"Poetical exaggeration," said Lavinia.

"Once you loved poetry; I had your own words for it. Oh! how you have deceived me!"

"Deceived you!" exclaimed Lavinia, haughtily.

"Yes; deceived me," repeated Paolo, vehemently; "was it not deceiving me, when you made yourself appear what you were not? Have you forgotten the long conversation we had together at your first sitting for your portrait? We compared tastes for hours; and yours suited mine, and mine yours. Simplicity, affection, refinement, nature, those were your idols. What were jewels, operas, fashion, to a flower of the field, the song of the nightingale, a walk in the soft moonlight? I accepted every word that fell from your lips as Gospel truth; laugh at me for a fool. *You* care for flowers, or a man's honest heart! *You* care for nothing but noise, glitter, show, and conventionalities."

As Paolo spoke, Lavinia's proud head drooped. The conversation alluded to was as present to her mind as if it had occurred only yesterday; all that she had then said, carried away by strong sympathy, she had said in perfect good faith, and really felt at the moment; but every remembered word now fell on her conscience

with the weight of a deserved reproach, for she could not deny that the tenor of her present existence was not easily to be reconciled with the inclinations and sentiments she had professed on that occasion.

"Yes," pursued the young man, "you pursue the shadow instead of the substance; to a little tinsel you sacrifice a mine of gold. Here, within your reach, is the strength which lays low mountains, the talisman which renders invincible, the fountain which gives eternal youth, and you throw them all from you. Blind that you are," went on Paolo, with an irresistible burst of passion, "you trample upon the heart which contains all these treasures. Love, love divine, weighs less with you than a few grains of the incense of flattery. May the day never come when sickness and sorrow shall open your eyes, but too late, to the emptiness of what you hold to, to the value of what you let drop! Health, youth, riches, are but poor shields against misfortune, believe me; at all ages, and in all stations of life, we are vulnerable through those we love."

A strong conviction, unswervingly acted upon, and especially if passionately expressed, will command the respect even of those, who deem it illfounded or even wrong — nay, it will do more — it will, at certain moments, make its very opponents doubt the soundness of their own arguments against it, the wisdom of their own opposition. More than once had Lavinia, while still under the spell of Paolo's thrilling accents, entertained such doubts, such fears; half formed a resolution to humour his whims; and, if not entirely to withdraw from the gay world, at least to slacken the chains binding her to it. But these were mariner's vows. The world is a tyrannical master, and admits of no half-

service. It is like one of those irresistible machines, in which if you get so much as a limb entangled, the rest of your body is sure to follow, and be pounded to atoms.

A young lady enrolled in the world's militia can no more safely leave its ranks than a soldier his regiment on the battle-field. Fancy the brilliant Miss Jones expressing her unwillingness to go to the duchess's party, or wishing to leave some embassy ball at midnight. Nonsense! she must not lose the position she had gained; it would be stupid, or strange, or ridiculous. Who has not seen sober people quarrelled with for not drinking themselves drunk with a company flushed with wine? Who has not heard young ladies' beauty slandered because they wore high dresses? One must be endowed with a singular power of isolation to react against the intellectual atmosphere one breathes. Miss Jones had not this power; how could she have acquired it? So she rushed along with the current, the more madly that she wanted to escape from her own reflections.

Nor was Mancini himself free from occasional misgivings, that he was too absolute in his requirements, too exacting a lover. He accordingly made many resolves to be for the future more gentle and conciliating; but the passion of the moment whirled away his good purposes like leaves on the wings of the wind. "She is vulgar," would he say to himself in one of his stormy moods, "dazzled by light, intoxicated by sound, happy to display her beauty — to flutter about like a gaudy butterfly. I might sooner extract honey from a stone, than love from her heart." Then followed the reaction, and an inner voice would make itself heard, replying,

"Well, suppose her to be all this, what right have I to plague her life thus? She has been educated in this way, and she cannot change. I must either take her as she is, or leave her. To torment her as I do, is ungenerous, nay cowardly. Better cut the Gordian knot, and be done with it. I'll write her a letter and go away — to-morrow." The letter was written, the morrow came, and the day after to-morrow, and another and yet another morrow were added, and he was still in Rome, the prey and sport of the most harrowing irresolution. The effort he had once made he was now incapable of renewing. Seven words had unnerved him, "I love you with all my heart." They had traced a magic circle round him which, do what he would, he could not overstep. Thornton had been a true prophet when he had foretold this state of things — Thornton who, seeing his prophecy fulfilled, far from triumphing or deriding, was to Paolo the meekest, most indulgent, and considerate of comforters and friends.

In this conflict of feeling Paolo wasted away; each succeeding hour his heart quivered and shrank in Lavinia's hold, as does a bird in the unconsciously cruel grasp of a child.

CHAPTER XXIV.

What there is in a Roll of Parchment.

PAOLO was preparing one day to go to Miss Lavinia when he was interrupted by Du Genre, dressed *cap-à-pie* for travelling, coming in to bid him a hasty farewell. The French realist had been summoned to France by the express desire of an old uncle of his residing in

Dauphiné, on whom the faculty of medicine had passed sentence of death.

"The wish of a bachelor uncle, furnished with a brace of thousand francs for every month in the year, is sacred at all times," said the facetious Frenchman; "though I must say it is scarcely delicate of the good old gentleman to get worse just on the eve of Carnival, and thus deprive a dutiful nephew of the honest recreations of the season he had been anticipating. '*Entre la coupe et la lèvre*,' as we say in France. I should not have minded the call so much eight-and-forty hours later. But, no. I must be at Civita Vecchia by day-break, because the steamer piques itself on keeping its time to a minute. We live in an absurd world; by Jupiter! we do. We human beings are born and die in and out of season, disregarding of all order and method; and yet the things we create for our use, we insist on their being models of punctuality."

"Forty-eight hours of pleasure you can probably redeem at some other period," said Paolo, by way of comfort.

"Most illogically reasoned, my dear Telemachus: no loss is ever redeemed; if you go without dinner to-day, and eat two to-morrow, you have not made up your loss of to-day. You forget that a couple of days' respite would enable me to assist at Armida's *début*, and I regret sorely not to do so."

"What Armida? What *début*?" asked the Roman.

"No use playing the Indian with me," retorted the Frenchman; "you are too intimate in certain quarters not to know all about it, you sly rogue."

"As true as I live, I have no idea as to whom you are alluding," said Paolo, somewhat anxiously.

"To put you on the right track, I will put a dot on my I's," replied the realist, "In the first place, then, Armida is the *nom de guerre* of a ravishing Inglesina, of whom that lying jade, Rumour, says you know more than most people."

Paolo frowned.

"Oblige me by giving no nicknames to a person, to a lady, who honours me with her acquaintance."

"There, already in the saddle! as ticklish and pugnacious as an American senator," said Du Genre. "Pardon me, but I only call the fair one what all Rome calls her. I mean no disparagement, I assure you; quite the contrary. Armida is a name rendered famous, I have heard, by one of your own great poets. I never read Tasso; in point of poetry, Beranger is my alpha and omega."

"And this *début*?" inquired Paolo.

"This *début* is to take place on the day after to-morrow, at the private theatre of the Marchioness Del-fuego y Arcos. Every one with the smallest claim to fashion is to be there. But come now, you know better than I do."

"Go on, pray," said Paolo, briefly.

With a little less brilliancy in his intonations than usual, Du Genre continued, —

"The marchioness is Queen Elizabeth; Arm — the Inglesina, I mean — Mary Stuart. Leicester's part is entrusted to a tenor, an amateur, but who beats Mario, I am told — the Prince of Rocca-Ginestra."

To judge from the dark crimson of Paolo's countenance, all the blood in his veins had rushed tumultuously to his head; two seconds after, he was pale as death. Likely enough, Du Genre drew his own

inferences from signs that he could not but remark; but he kept his thoughts to himself, breaking a conscious silence, by saying, "Well, good-by, my dear Telemachus." — A sort of emotion, quite unanticipated, troubled his fluency. "If you come to Paris, I depend on your seeking me out, for in that heavenly city I shall surely be. Life is possible nowhere but in Paris, and, perhaps, in Rome. Paris is the place for you; it will cure you of your tragic views of life. You are one of the best fellows I know. I never flatter, but on certain matters — well, I shall not enlarge on the theme of your errors at present. Believe me, and you'll be the happier for it. Life is a farce; and, with all love and respect, I say, *Sans adieu!*" and the good-natured, volatile fellow hurried away, singing, as he ran down the stairs, in a voice that had a touch of pathos in it, "*Tout n'est dans ce bas monde qu'un jeu, qu'un jeu.*" The echo of the singer's voice had scarcely died away, when Paolo rushed forth, on his way to Palazzo Morlacchi.

There is in the heart of even a worldly woman, who loves, be it ever so little, a vein of gold, which, if properly tracked and delicately handled, will yield a crop past expectation; but, if roughly dealt with, will be lost sight of amid the rubbish in which it is imbedded. Could the incensed youth have read Miss Jones's innermost thoughts, at the moment he was breathing nothing but scorn and indignation against her, he would have fallen at her feet in adoration. Lavinia had never been so near taking a step in the direction wished by Paolo as on this particular day; it needed so little to have fostered the intention into a fact. The idea of taking a prominent part in the pri-

vate theatricals, was becoming more and more disagreeable to her; how to draw back from her promise, was the subject that preoccupied her every thought. It was not only that now, the first excitement of vanity being calmed, she had the hearty repugnance of a young and naturally modest woman to appear as a *débutante* on a stage, called private by courtesy; but that she was both frightened and annoyed at the ardour shown by the prince-tenor's pantomime towards her, ever since the dress rehearsals had commenced. Leicester was privileged by duty of his part, to kneel more than once to her, to take her hand, carry it to his heart, in short, express by look and gesture the most passionate love; and all that in duty he was bound to do, he did with a spontaneity, a life-like reality, that was the *nec plus ultra* of acting — if acting it was. The poor *pro tempore* Queen of Scots was sadly puzzled and displeased, when certain *apartés* not to be found in the libretto, reached her ear, and of which the earl-prince was lavish, when the queen-marchioness happened to be off the stage. Another source of uneasiness to Lavinia was the sudden and entire change which had come over the noble creole, since the afore-said final rehearsals had commenced. To her ladyship's hitherto enthusiastic friendship for her English favourite, had succeeded the most icy coldness — indeed, a thorough estrangement was evidently imminent.

Miss Jones had more than once surprised flashes of anger in the fine black eyes, and tones of bitterness in the voice, of her dearest friend. Very vivid doubts suddenly awoke in the English girl's mind that the marchioness really was not the sort of woman she ought to have associated with intimately; nor the prince,

the man she ought to act and sing with; and a perception grew daily stronger upon her, that Paolo had been right in his judgment of both. Accordingly, he had perhaps never stood higher in Miss Lavinia's opinion, than when, on this day, hearing that he was in the atelier, she went thither with quick steps to meet him. Lest the reader should have forgotten it, we may as well here repeat, in a parenthesis, that the dialogue between master and pupil was always carried on in Italian, and consequently allowed the most perfect freedom of discussion; for the chaperones, Mrs. Jones, or Miss Jones's maid, who were, one or the other, always present at the interviews, were both triumphantly ignorant of any language but their own.

Lavinia's smile, as she approached him, was as rich in promise as is a rainbow in a cloudy sky, had Paolo been able rightly to interpret the sign; but at sight of his angry face, the glorious light faded away from her countenance.

"You grudge your oldest friend in Rome a share in the benefit you are going to confer on the multitude," began the Italian; "I mean," he added, seeing perplexity in her blue eyes, "I mean the pleasure of witnessing your triumphs as a singer and actress. The whole city is astir with the news of your approaching *début*, and you have left my poor hermitselves in ignorance of the event; not even offered me an invitation — I should say, ticket of admission."

The tone of his voice made his words as ironical as he wished; they pained her, and made her good angel take flight.

"For a man of your high aspirations, and trans-

cidental habits," answered she, "I was certain that such frivolous amusements could have no attraction."

"Frivolous!" he re-echoed. "You are very indulgent in thus baptizing them frivolous. Would to God they were only that! Call them rather —"

"Pray," interrupted Lavinia, "spare me any more of your sermons. I am bound to render an account of my actions to *no one*, but to those who stand to me in the light of my parents."

"To no one else?" asked Paolo, with a look full of meaning.

"To no one else."

She pronounced the words firmly.

"Are you quite sure," proceeded Paolo, shaking from head to foot with repressed emotion, "are you indeed sure you have given to no one else the right of warning you?"

"If I ever gave such a right, I now withdraw it," was the quick, decided answer.

"Be it so then," exclaimed the young man, his wrath breaking bounds. "Be it so, and welcome — yes, welcome to debase yourself by way of asserting your independence — welcome to add to the indecorum of exhibiting yourself as a public actress, the disgrace of doing so in company with a man, regarded by all Rome with abhorrence and disgust."

"Your usual style of exaggeration," said she; "you lend to *all Rome* your own individual feelings."

"How becoming the defence of Prince Rocca-Ginestra sounds from your lips," sneered Paolo. "That you may better vindicate that nobleman's traduced character, allow me to relate to you one instance of his prowess."

"Save yourself the trouble," returned Lavinia, "it is quite unnecessary. I am already well aware of what really constitutes the prince's crime in your eyes."

"May I ask what you have decided that to be?"

"The being a prince," she replied, "as it was the count's being a count, as it is the marchioness's being a marchioness."

"Doubtless," retorted Paolo, "I have blasphemed your gods, and they must be revenged. What excuse shall I make? I, and such as I am, you know, are uncivilized beings, and give ourselves the luxury of despising what is despicable, in spite of escutcheon and coronets."

In all hardly contested battles, be it between two lovers, or be it between two armies, there comes a climax of exasperation, at which the wish to conquer becomes quite secondary to the wish of doing harm. This moment had arrived for Miss Lavinia; she did not believe a word of what she was going to say, but she knew it would goad him, and she said it.

"May we not affect sometimes to despise what we —— envy?"

"Envy?" repeated he; "envy — what?"

"The grapes of the fable," said Lavinia, "were sour, because out of reach."

Paolo laughed outright, then said, —

"One instant, and I will show you the reverse of the fable."

He was gone.

There lay in a corner of Paolo's studio a rusty cylinder of tin, within which was enclosed a moth-eaten scroll of parchment, containing the letters patent of nobility of the first marquis, and count of the Holy

Roman Empire, in the family Rodipani. The title was to descend to male heirs lawfully begotten, and, in default of the same, to the heirs female, who were by a special clause empowered to transmit it to their heirs male or female. Paolo therefore, as the son and heir of the late marquis's daughter, had an incontrovertible right in force of this proviso, — and he knew that he had, — to assume the title of marquis, had he so chosen to do. This venerable parchment, rolled up in a cylinder of tin, to preserve it from all casualties, had been handed down from Rodipani to Rodipani, until, in course of time, it descended to our acquaintance, the old marquis. At his death, it passed, with a few other relics, into the hands of his daughter Bianca, married to Mancini, Paolo's father. At the demise of the latter, Paolo found the cylinder in a chest of family papers, and, loth to destroy anything that had belonged to either parent, he had laid it in a corner of his atelier to bide the ravages of time.

Well, Paolo — we crave the reader's indulgence for him; what he did was very childlike, but he was very young, and very much excited — well then, Paolo went and fetched the rusty tin case, and in about as many words as it has cost us lines, explained the nature of its contents to Miss Lavinia, finishing off with the flourish, that the grapes were within his reach, but that he scorned them. Upon this, with a somewhat melodramatic air — young folks are always so emphatic — he tore the innocent parchment in twain, and cast the pieces at Miss Jones's feet.

I must be true that women have a weakness for theatrical effects, or Lavinia would not have thought Paolo as grand as we consider him petty. He, who

could be a marquis, and would not be a marquis, appeared in her eyes a madman, but a sublime madman; and she applied herself with heart and will to cure him of such an aberration. She solemnly appealed to his reason; but her arguments, so unanswerable to her mind, broke into foam against what was a rock of principle with him, viz., that merit and demerit were strictly personal, and that the transmission of a badge of honour or dishonour to such as had done nothing to deserve the one or the other, was the acme of absurdity. She then appealed to his heart, reproaching him with little love for her, that he willingly cast aside the only sure means of conquering the obstacles that stood between him and her; she even tried to make a bargain, promising, if he would yield, to renounce now and for ever the theatricals at Villa Torralba, the prince, the marchioness and such like; but reproaches, entreaties, promises smote in vain against a sentiment all powerful with Paolo — the sentiment of what he owed to himself, to his country and party. Not for her, not for the dominion of the world, would he desert the ranks of the people and join those of the aristocracy. He was too proud of his title of plebeian to exchange it for that of marquis, and so on. Paolo was not the son of his father for nothing. Lavinia did not, and could not understand him, nor he her. The difference of education, of the habits and feelings of a whole life, of the social and political state of the respective countries to which they belonged, raised between the two a sort of mental Chinese wall, which time alone, and dearly bought experience, and, above all, a change in the moral atmosphere, which both had hitherto exclusively breathed might level. The upshot of the present inter-

view was, that they parted in anger, never, as far as words went, to meet again.

Perhaps the chapter ought not to conclude without meeting a question, probably asked by this time. Was there any justifiable foundation for Paolo's attacks upon the Prince of Rocca Ginestra? What had the prince done so dreadfully wrong? Here is a categorical answer. The prince, under an assumed humble name and station, had seduced a girl of the Transtevere, renowned for her beauty, and refused to right her when her fault could no longer be concealed. The young woman, in despair, had thrown herself into the Tiber. The sad catastrophe created a great sensation, which lasted just the time great sensations last in large and busy cities. The prince left Rome, and spent a couple of years in travelling abroad, and, on his return, was an ornament, as before, of the best society. The universal feelings of abhorrence and disgust, about which Paolo enlarged, were, to say the truth, wholly confined to a few visionaries like himself, and to the Transteverini, who had not forgotten what had happened to one of their body, and who thenceforth bore a grudge to the prince, as uncivilized people are wont to do in similar cases.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Crash.

It is the 28th of December, the day fixed for the great operatic performance at Villa Torralba. The evening is cold and rainy. Rain and cold are of little matter to the rich, who have at their disposal downy-cushioned, comfortable carriages, and plenty of furs and cashmeres to shelter them from such nuisances. The

crème de la crème are on their way to the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos'.

In his room in the Via Babuino sits Paolo, more dead than alive. The die is cast, Paolo will be away presently. His trunks are packed, and already on the travelling carriage, which is standing at the street door. Post horses are bespoken, and Thornton's Italian servant waits but a word from his master to go and fetch them. Thornton himself, paler and thinner than ever, the double scar round his mouth more marked than usual, walks in and out of the room, seats himself for an instant, rises the next; he is anxious and perplexed. At last he ventures on saying, "Shall we send for the horses, Paolo?"

"Not yet, not before Salvator comes; he is to be here the moment the — the entertainment is over. I cannot decently go after making him promise to come."

Mortimer is silent: he goes away, returns, sits down, gets up; at last, he speaks again.

"What is the use of prolonging this agony? If any good could arise from delay — but you know, she will do as she said. Salvator told you this morning he had heard of no change in her intention. Better go at once, if you are to go at all. Come, Paolo, be a man."

"Ah! it is easy to say, be a man," Paolo says, with a smile that brings tears to Thornton's eyes; "less easy to be so, when all your blood gushes out through a large gap in your heart."

Mortimer walks to the window, and by the light of the street lamps studies the pouring rain. Thornton feels the more keenly for Paolo, because he sees in him

a living image of himself, as he was years ago, only he had had no friend by his side.

Paolo flings himself on the sofa, and buries his head in the cushions. Paolo cannot believe that he is really going from Rome, cannot believe that Lavinia will ever consummate an act, which he has told her is to separate them for ever. His whole being clings desperately to this woman, as a shipwrecked mariner clings to the plank which is his only chance of life. Paolo hopes against hope, and finds legitimate reasons for hope in all the possible, and next to impossible, contingencies suggested by his fevered brain. She might have altered her mind at the last minute; the performance might have been put off on account of the weather (even a respite would be a godsend to him); somebody might be ill — not she, God forbid! but the marchioness, the prince might have a cold; or the accursed theatre might have caught fire; or an earth-quake shaken it from its foundations as the curtain rose. Why not? such things had been; he recollected the story of an unfortunate wretch, absolutely on his way to the scaffold, whose life had been saved by such a catastrophe.

Hark! eight o'clock strikes, — the fatal hour. A whistle, and there she is on the stage in all her beauty. Hundreds of eyes are riveted on and devour the noblest form that ever came from the hands of nature. She sings; every breath is held; you might hear the fall of a pin. She sings as she alone can sing, as she sang to him. She ceases, and long loud plaudits make the walls tremble; bouquets fall in a shower at her feet; fashionables of all ages, with curly locks or bald pates, or hoary-haired lords, dukes, princes, loll half out of

the boxes, languidly flapping their white gloves together, striving who shall win a look or a smile from her. She bows and smiles, and smiles and bows; retires, and is forced to reappear, and encored *sine fine*. There never was such a *furor* of admiration. Well may she look as radiantly happy as she does; happy, independently of him; happy without him; happy in spite of him; happy, while his heart breaks. No, it cannot! it shall not be. Here comes the avenger. A young man, so pale and haggard, more like a phantom than real flesh and blood, reels towards her. She shrinks from him in terror; he follows, reaches her, and stabs himself at her feet. There, it is her work.

While the young man's heated imagination was running riot on such scenes, Mortimer watched the lapse of time.

"Half-past nine, Paolo; had anything occurred to put a stop to the performance, Salvator would have been here long ago. Shall I send for the horses?"

"Not yet; not till Salvator comes. Have patience with me, I pray."

Another hour went by, a vigorous pull at the door bell, and in rushed Salvator Rosa, as thoroughly drenched as if he had spent the last week at the bottom of a well. Water dripped from his shapeless hat, from the sleeves, from the flaps of his famous black coat, water ran down from his brow, nose, ears, chin, hands. His progress through the room was like that of a watering-pot. A small lake formed on the spot where he stood still. He would have served as a model for a river god.

"Well?" exclaimed Paolo.

"Well?" exclaimed Thornton.

Salvator had run so fast that he had no breath left to speak his tidings. He pointed to his tongue, which clove to his palate, and by signs asked for drink. Mortimer went for some wine, and was in the act of pouring some into a glass, when the little man snatched the bottle from his hand, and, putting it to his mouth, half emptied it at a draught. Giving a long sigh of relief, half-singing, half-speaking, he pronounced, —

"Fiasco solenne."

"Poor fellow, say no more until you have changed your clothes," said Thornton.

"No, no; first and foremost, my story," cried the excited painter of scenes; "though I will pull off my boots, if you have a pair of slippers to spare, it needn't stop my tongue." Seated with his back to the fire, and struggling violently with his wet boots, Salvator began, "Well, there never was a more promising beginning—"

"What about Miss Jones?" interrupted Paolo.

"Miss Jones is safe at home. Well," he continued, allowing Thornton to take off his coat, and put a railway wrapper round him.

"Did she, or did she not, appear on the stage?" asked Paolo.

"Yes, she did, of course;" and Salvator, for the third time, repeated his beginning "Well," when Paolo a third time abruptly stopped him with, —

"What has happened to her?"

"My dear fellow," returned the good-natured narrator, "if you won't let me speak, you will never hear what has happened. Well," resumed he for the fourth time, "as I said before, there never was a more promising beginning, nor a more sudden or melancholy conclusion; though, I must say, I, for my part, have

not been without misgivings as to something of the sort. *Il sospetto in cor parlava*; but I must not anticipate. The first chorus was got through beautifully, and the tenor's *Ah! chi sa se in questo istante* was charmingly sung. Even a tyro, and the prince is far from that, could not have helped producing an effect; the words are so pathetic. I wrote them myself really from inspiration; I did, I assure you. Well, to the point. Next, you know, comes the contralto's *recitativo obbligato*. Armid —, Miss Lavinia, I mean, gave it in masterly style; it created a *furore*, the very chairs clapped. Upon my faith, Paolo, when a woman possesses a voice like that, it is a sin to smother it."

"If you would oblige me by leaving all comments for another time, and give us facts now," was the reply.

"*Gelosia il sen mi lacera*," sang the incorrigible little fellow.

"Well, let us stick to facts. Miss Mary Stuart's recitative is followed by a cavatina commencing with a lovely adagio, which progresses into an andantino vivace, during which Prince of Rocca Ginestra — Leicester, I mean — makes his appearance. Here is the culminating point of the first act, the duetto between the tenor and contralto. Let me explain the plot clearly. The scene is in a forest. Leicester, who has accompanied Queen Elizabeth on a hunting expedition, gives his royal mistress the slip, and comes to where Queen Mary is in tears. *Perche piangi?* and all the rest. She gives her motives for weeping: '*Sola son tradita oppressa — non un cor che al mio risponda.*' 'There is a heart which answers thine,' says Leicester. 'Whose heart?' asks she. 'Mine.' Upon which he falls at her

feet, and roars out a sublime *Io t'amo*. With this tremendous *Io t'amo* ends the andante vivace of the duetto and *subito* the stretta begins, *m'ami dunque? Io t'amo, oh gioja!* ta-ta-ta — re-re-re-ra. It is at this juncture — after the stretta, mark, and not before — that Queen Elizabeth ought to step forth and surprise Leicester at the feet of Mary. Here is the moment to inform you of certain suspicions of mine. A series of observations which I had made, quite involuntary, on the marchioness during the latter rehearsals, had given me some not very vague apprehensions that this duetto would bring forth mischief. I had seen her ladyship change colour at certain ticklish passages; then she was so whimsical, so peevish, cavilling constantly at the two singers, ridiculing Leicester's exaggerated acting, finding fault with the English young lady's singing, even going so far one day as to propose that the duetto should be left out; — in short, her behaviour was so unaccountable, that I could not get rid of the belief that the jealousy of Queen Elizabeth would not be feigned. You know, or perhaps you do not know, that it is believed the marchioness — how shall I say it? it is hard to speak against a person whose bread I eat — well, the rumour is, that there is a flirtation between her and the prince. It may be so, or it may not: rumour, generally speaking, is a liar; but the upshot of the duetto was this. Leicester, on his knees, had scarcely sung out his passionate *Io t'amo*, when, lo and behold! — my hair rises on my head again at the mere recollection — out comes the marchioness with the spring of a tigress, and sends the luckless prince flat on his back. The orchestra, busy with the stretta, losing their wits at the untimely entry, hesitate, blunder, and stop; the audience, in

their ignorance, applaud such natural acting. Something must be done. I leap out of my prompter's box, run to the scenes on the left, and, piff-paff, let down the curtain. Was it a time coming down, that weary curtain! However, down it was at last, and then I hurried to the field of battle. All the staff of the theatre were already assembled there. The scene that was enacting baffles description. The prince, with some of the men of the chorus, were endeavouring to pacify, and induce the enraged marchioness to leave the stage, so that what she was saying might not be heard by those in the boxes and the pit. But there she stood in a paroxysm of passion, threatening with hands and looks Miss Lavinia, and calling her bad names, luckily in Spanish. Miss Lavinia, white as the whitest marble, but composed and self-collected, stood erect like a true queen, gazing scornfully at her antagonist, not speaking a word, save when she said, on my approaching her, 'I deserve it all for having ever set my foot in this house. I have not lacked for warnings. Tell this to Signor Paolo.' Depend upon it, my friend, there is the right stuff of a woman in that girl. Presently, the audience began to show symptoms of impatience. A noise, like that of the rising tide, diversified with a hiss or two, were premonitory signs of a coming storm. I shook myself up, and with a 'To the breach, friend Salvator!' slipped from behind the curtain, and summoning to my aid my best bow and most winning smile, said, *coram populo*, 'The marchioness offers to this distinguished assembly her heartfelt regret and excuses; she deposes me, ladies and gentlemen, to assure you, that no one here present can more sincerely deplore than does her ladyship the unfortunate indisposition of

one of the principal performers, which puts an inevitable stop to the opera for this evening.' For an impromptu not so bad, was it? but, for pity's sake, something to drink, or I shall never get to the end of my story. I have not finished yet; there is a tail to the comet."

Salvator drank, smacked his lips expressively, and continued, "To make what followed clear to you, I must use the past tense. Have patience a moment. For days, you must understand, I had been urging on the marchioness the propriety and prudence of admitting no one behind the scenes, save those who had business there. At last, and not without difficulty, I got her persuaded to issue this prohibition; but at the same time she insisted on an exception in favour of Count Fortiguerra, a special favourite of hers. He would be so useful, he was so clever and experienced, and all that. He was useful, no gainsaying that, though his presence was a perpetual eyesore to me. I distrusted him greatly; not in consequence of Paolo's surmises about him; no, I had surer foundations to build on. One of our chorus singers, an elderly man, a native of Ancona, had recognized him as a fellow-citizen, and repeatedly warned us that he was no count at all, but a noted swindler. Be this true or not, the old Anconitan, Clelia and I, agreed that we would keep a close watch on the *soi-disant* count; for, besides all sorts of costly dresses and valuable ornaments, there were the marchioness's diamonds to be specially looked after. They had been arranged for the occasion as a diadem to be worn in the last act, and their value, the marchioness said, was immense. Clelia had charge of this crown, and some other jewels, kept in their cases, ready for use, in a light closet adjoining the stage, and which served as

her ladyship's dressing-room. In the surprise and bustle of the improvised scene of jealousy, the count and the diamonds were forgotten by us all three. Now, to return. When, after performing another graceful salaam to the public, I retired once more behind the curtain, I was charmed to find actual hostilities had ceased. My lady had allowed herself to be led to the very back of the stage, and, though still looking fierce, looked less intensely so than before. She had ceased venting her fury in language, and maintained a sullen silence. All this I saw at a glance, and also that Clelia was absent. Instantly the diamonds recurred to me. She is gone to look after them, thought I. Scarcely had the thought been formed, when a wild cry issued from the dressing-room. It was Clelia's voice. I made but one bound from the spot where I stood, into the closet, and there I saw — we all saw, for every one on the stage followed at my heels — there we saw Clelia wrestling with the count, and the jewel-cases scattered on the ground. No need of words to explain what was the matter. Surprised in the very act of possessing himself of the jewels, the so-called count had let them drop, and was struggling to make his escape, which he might have easily done by a back stair, had Clelia's grasp of him been less resolutely tenacious. In another instant, I and some other men had hold of him. Well, what do you think the impudent rascal did? I scarcely believed my ears. As sure as I am here, he declared that he had caught Clelia in the act of making off with the diamonds, and that we had come in time to help him to secure her. But people can't help believing their own eyes, and no one for a moment doubted who was the thief. The prince called out for the gendarmes

— there were half-a-dozen on duty at the villa — but the marchioness, breaking her silence, and looking rather pleased than not, forbade any stir to be made. ‘Let the fellow go,’ said she. ‘I am not astonished at his turning out a thief; he was introduced to me at that fine lady’s house,’ pointing to Miss Lavinia, who really looked more dead than alive. I whispered to Clelia to take the young English lady away to the laundry, while I, on my side, would try to find her uncle and aunt. I was fortunate enough to do so at once, and I ordered their carriage to a back entrance. Poor Miss Jones, how she clung to my Clelia! She put on one of Clelia’s dresses to go away in; and there’s an end of my story. I was told, as I made my way upstairs, to call down Miss Lavinia, that my lady had laconically dismissed every one about her, and retired to her own apartment. Clelia, who has been sleeping at the villa for the last fortnight, chose to stay, saying she would not leave her mistress in this moment of trial; so nothing remained for me to do, but to come hither as fast as I could — and here I am.”

Having concluded his narrative, Salvator allowed himself to be persuaded to go and change his wet clothes, an act of prudence performed with harlequin-like celerity. Our trio, being too excited to have any chance of sleep, sat through the remainder of the night, talking of, and annotating on the events just narrated. Is it necessary to add, that the post horses were countermanded, and the travelling carriage ordered back to the coach-house? Lavinia in tears, Lavinia repentant, Lavinia unhappy, had a thousandfold stronger hold on Paolo’s heart than Lavinia the queen of beauty, Lavinia triumphant and happy. To go to her, to throw himself

at her feet, to seek pardon for his roughness, to comfort and console her, such were now the yearnings of Paolo's whole soul. Thornton hazarded no remonstrance, did not even evince any surprise at Paolo's change of mind as to their intended departure. More than ever convinced that no good could come of his friend's attachment to Miss Jones, he felt that it was too deep-rooted to leave any chance of its being combated with success. Why then afflict one already so grievously afflicted? He could not harbour such a thought. Therefore, neither approving, nor disapproving, he kept Paolo faithful company down the dangerous slope he was bent on treading, intent only on sparing, or at least softening for him, the shocks and falls inevitable on that slippery descent.

About dawn, Salvator's spirit refusing to support his flesh any longer, he gave way, and stretching his weary little body on a tolerably hard sofa, was soon sound asleep. Salvator's lively tongue once at rest, all conversation ceased; Paolo and Thornton sat on awhile, each communing with his own thoughts, until the bright sun shining into the room, warned them to make ready for another day's burdens.

The friends had not long retired to their own rooms, when a letter was brought to Paolo. It was from Lavinia. She wrote: —

"If you are generous enough, and I am sure you are, to wish to see once more one who has rendered you evil for good, pray come here as soon as you can. We leave this evening; I shall be at home all day. It will be a great comfort to me, if he who has witnessed my folly should also witness my repentance.

"L. J."

What transports of joy and despair did these few lines give rise to: joy at the entire recantation avowed by them, despair at the intimation of approaching separation. The resolution of the English family to quit Rome, will surprise no one less than it did Paolo. He had been sure of it. After what had passed, even a man less sensitive to the world's ridicule than Mr. Jones, might be reasonably apprehensive of, and shrink from the award of public opinion. The one fact of having patronized — worse, of having allowed himself to be patronized by — an impostor and matriculated thief, was sufficient to make the most self-conceited soul alive, aware, that, for the present, Rome was no place for him or his family.

The abrupt and mysterious termination of the entertainment at Villa Torralba, was, naturally enough, the talk of all the city. The most absurd stories were circulating, and, moreover, finding credence; for instance, the marchioness in a fit of jealousy had stabbed the Prince of Rocca Ginestra, whose life was despaired of; a fabulous sum, and a fabulous amount of diamonds, had been offered to, and accepted by the Government as hush-money. Miss Jones had, in her attempt to save the prince, her betrothed, received a serious wound. These were the prominent *on dits* of wide-mouthed rumour, brought to Via Babuino by Salvator, who had gone out early to collect the public gossip.

Paolo went to Palazzo Morlacchi at as early an hour as he decently could. The first part of the interview was such as might be expected, under the circumstances, from two noble extreme natures — a struggle of generosity as to who should take the most blame, and most exonerate the other. The second scene was

as intimate, explicit, and full of candour, as was to be looked for from two young lovers, who, after much discord, found out that they had but one mind, one heart between them, and were on the point of parting. Paolo had made more way in Lavinia's heart during the last few hours, than during the previous four months of their acquaintance. They solemnly pledged their troth the one to the other, and interchanged love tokens — Paolo giving to Lavinia a small gold ring, once his mother's, and Lavinia, at his prayer, cutting off one of her heavy ringlets for him. She also willingly promised to humour a whim of his, never to alter her style of wearing her hair, but to wear it twisted into a diadem round her head, as it was when he first saw and loved her.

"When we next meet," said childlike Paolo, "the mere sight of your hair arranged in the way I like so much, will tell me that you have thought of me and still love me."

And now it remained to be settled when and where Paolo could join her. As neither aunt nor niece knew anything of Mr. Jones's plans for the future, save that Siena was to be their first halt, the fixing on a date and place of meeting beforehand was a matter of utter impossibility. All that Lavinia could do was to promise that whenever they should be certain of stopping somewhere for any length of time, she would let Paolo know, and send their address. Then he would join them, but not before a certain time had elapsed between the day of his receiving her letter and that of his departure. This condition greatly ruffled the impatient young man, who, however, was made to understand how Mr. Jones's suspicions could not fail to be aroused

by the coincidence of Paolo's immediate arrival with the fact of their having just settled. Lavinia named a month, but, on Paolo's urgent entreaties, reduced it to a fortnight. That fortnight aunt and niece would employ in trying to prepare Mr. Jones for Paolo's possible reappearance, on the strength of a project they had heard him mention, of visiting that particular town or city.

The moment of separation was now at hand. Those who have been in a similar predicament know what such moments are like; words cannot describe it to those who are ignorant of such bitter quarters of an hour, when the liveliest faith, and the most vivid hopes, grow dim. Clelia, luckily or unluckily, made her appearance at this critical moment. She had come, at Lavinia's own pressing invitation, to be thanked for the kindness shown in the emergency at Villa Torralba. Paolo was thus forced to put a control on his emotions, and Lavinia's farewell was more constrained than perhaps it might otherwise have been. But there were no reasons to prevent Paolo from showing his feelings towards kind Mrs. Jones. He took an affectionate leave of her, and a more formal one of Mr. Jones, and then, with a full heart, went his way.

As the Jones's travelling carriage emerged from Porta del Popolo at six o'clock that same evening, Lavinia noticed a tall figure wrapped in a cloak by the roadside, and saw, with a fluttering heart, a white handkerchief waved towards her — the last salute of poor bereaved Paolo.

CHAPTER XXVI.

On the Rack.

So long as the honey gathered at his last meeting with Miss Jones remained fresh on Paolo's lips, life went on with him better than he had hoped; but when each succeeding day and week carried away a particle of the sweet, and the bitter beneath made itself felt anew; when, to be more clear, the recollections, the images and feelings, connected with that blessed interview, began to fade, and to be superseded by recollections, images, and feelings of far older date, and far less agreeable nature; a new hell commenced for our poor friend. Wherever she went, the allurements of the world were sure to pursue one of her beauty and accomplishments; and could she, nay, would she, resist them for his sake? Was there any good reason why what had been, should not be again? Surely, she had forgotten him by this time; and so on. Such were the promptings of the tormentor within Paolo. Doubt, distrust, and jealousy, "the jaundice of the soul," kept him ever on the rack. Confidence in love is like the flower of the aloes, it blossoms but once.

He ate not, slept not, spoke not, he wandered about like a soul in pain. His sole solace, his sole diversion, were long walks alone of a night, out by that Porta del Popolo, where he had seen her for the last time. Shut up in his atelier all day long, inaccessible to his friends, even to Thornton and Salvator, unmindful of colours and palette, he rolled unceasingly his Sisiphus stone. The only human being he did not shrink from, was Salvator's betrothed. Clelia had seen *her* last,

thought well of her, and succeeded at intervals in inspiring him with some of her own faith in her. But Clelia's visits were rare as an angel's, and indeed so were Salvator's attempts to see him. All his time, as well as Clelia's, was taken up by the concerns at Villa Torralba, where *opus fervebat* now more than ever. Her ladyship had quickly recovered the late shock to her feelings, and had devoted all the resources of her active mind, and full purse, to filling up the important hiatus left in her operatic company by Miss Jones's secession. A professional *prima donna* had been engaged in Naples, rehearsal followed rehearsal apace, and scarcely two weeks after the date of the *fiasco solenne*, Maria Stuarda was performed to the accompaniment of the unbounded applause, and enthusiastic admiration of the same select audience, who, but a few days back, had made it the butt of their ridicule, and freely slandered in every one of their drawing-rooms the entertainer and the entertainment. No people in the world like fine people for their *savoir vivre*.

Seven weeks had gone by, and no letter from Miss Jones. What more conclusive proof could there be that he was forgotten? Despair was gnawing at the very core of Paolo's heart. Now, what had really become of the travellers? They only passed through Siena. Siena was bitterly cold and windy at that moment, and cold and wind peculiarly affected Mrs. Jones, grown more delicate than ever. Genoa would have suited her better, with its bright sun and balmy air, but it did not boast of sufficient English society for Mr. Jones, who objected, besides, to the narrow streets, all up and down, and, above all, to the Genoese cookery, which he pronounced uneatable. So, after a sojourn there of

some days, away they went again; this time to Nice. No want of English there; plenty and to spare. Nice found favour in Mr. Jones's eyes; it possessed also casinos and reading rooms. What he got to eat was far from good, but endurable; enough to prevent any immediate danger of starvation. The ladies liked the genial climate, the verdant hills, the blue sky, and sea. In this beatific condition of a family all of a mind, the Joneses pitched their tents *pro tempore* in Nice. *Pro tempore* mark, for Mr. Jones, repeatedly sounded as to the duration of their stay, with his constant diplomatic rejoinder of, "we shall see," remained a perfect sphinx to aunt and niece. They were thus afraid to venture a letter to Paolo.

In the meanwhile, pleasant acquaintances blossomed for the Joneses; they visited *quantum suff.*, and partook in moderation of the amusements of the carnival. One cannot shut oneself up, like an owl in an ivy bush, while every other Christian mortal around one is gathering together, and — dancing. From the time of their leaving Rome, up to their arrival at Nice, Lavinia had lived like a nun; she had not yet overcome the shock of the catastrophe at Villa Torralba, and, to do her justice, had been quite under the dominion of the feelings roused by her separation from Paolo. But now she grew a little impatient at her own state of normal despondency, and welcomed a little diversion. She had no more hesitation in so doing, than an invalid to swallow a potion prescribed by the physician. So long as she contracted no more intimacies, and did not make herself in any way conspicuous, she thought to herself, that she was committing no treason against Paolo. She was sure he would not grudge her some relaxation.

This congenial regimen came to a sudden stop. Small towns, where everybody meets and knows everybody — an allusion, of course, applying solely to strangers, the aborigines counting for nothing — small towns have their inconveniences for those who, like Mr. Jones, have precedents they would fain forget, and have forgotten. The signal for the 'Joneses' retreat from Nice was given by the arrival of an English family, with whom they had been acquainted at Rome. Paris is big enough to allow of a man, be he ever so on the defensive, spending some time there without much fear of disagreeable encounters. Our family, therefore, proceeded to Paris, and were soon as comfortably established as money could make them.

Among the pleasant acquaintances made at Nice, figured a certain Vicomte du Verlat, a well-bred, well-informed, sober-looking, middle-aged man, who had gone to Paris the week before Mr. Jones had felt himself compelled to decide on going thither also. But before his departure, the vicomte had left his Paris address with the Joneses, courteously soliciting the favour of being made acquainted with their presence in the French capital, whenever they might happen to be there. The state of the political horizon just then, as everybody may remember, clearly pointed to a close alliance between the two nations, and this anticipation created a reciprocal feeling of cordiality, which extended even to individuals. No sooner in Paris, than Mr. Jones left a card at the vicomte's hotel. The vicomte called immediately, begging leave to introduce his mother — wife he had none — and his sister, the générale. The introduction was mutually agreeable. Madame La Vicomtesse was a lively old lady of seventy, as fond

of company, of dress, hot rooms, and late hours, as any gay young woman of twenty. The générale, so called from the rank of her husband, was one of the mirrors of fashion.

The old vicomtesse invited her son's English friends to a great dinner, and the générale gave them a *soirée dansante*. Lavinia produced a great sensation at both — so pretty and so rich — and invitations fell in showers on the English family, much of the same calibre, and in the same way, dear reader, as is so graphically described in Lady Morgan's late Autobiography. In a wonderfully short time the Joneses were well launched in the best Parisian society.

And was the promised letter still unwritten to Paolo? Indeed, yes. More than the half of February had passed in this agreeable atmosphere, and still Mr. Jones continued impenetrable as to his intention of going or staying. It would be doing Miss Jones an unpardonable injustice to say that she was grown indifferent to the performance of a solemn promise. Though gently rocked into patience by the waves of admiration on which she floated, Lavinia had not relapsed into the Lavinia of Rome. Even in the midst of her triumphs as a beauty, she did think of the absent one; did think of him with a daily growing sense of uneasiness, lest he should misconstrue her long silence. After all, why should she not venture on writing? Even if they were to quit Paris, their next move could not be but to England, whither, at the worst, Mancini might easily follow them. Mrs. Jones warmly seconded the plan. Lavinia accordingly, on the 3rd of March, wrote and posted a letter for Rome, about the contents of which, all that it matters us to know is, that she stated her

reasons for not writing before, and gave her present address in Paris, 25, Boulevard des Capucines. This note despatched, Mrs. and Miss Jones spent a good deal of their spare time in calculating the probable epoch of Signor Mancini's arrival, with a view principally so to arrange matters as to have no peremptory engagements on their hands. According to their reckoning, Paolo, starting a fortnight after receipt of Miss Jones's letter, as had been settled, could not be in Paris before the end of March, at the soonest. They reckoned without Paolo's impatience.

Lavinia's letter had on him the effect that the introduction of air has on the half-dead bird shut up in a pneumatic machine. It revived him. His sombre despondency gave place to a feverish animation, a frantic longing to leave Rome at once. Those who know by experience what it is to be sick with hope deferred; those, for instance, who, receiving news of the dangerous illness of a far away mother or wife, burn to be on the road, yet for days have their movements hampered by passports, and police visas, — those alone can form an idea of the intensity of Paolo's impatience and restlessness. Fifteen more days of hell, in sight of paradise open and expecting you, are quite an eternity. The slave of his own word, Paolo uttered no complaint, but pined away in silence, consumed by a low fever. No food, no rest by day or night. Thornton at last took fright at Paolo's ghastly paleness and lustrous eyes, until his fears, overcoming his repugnance to advise a step implying the breach of a promise — he did give the advice. Whatever the cause, reasoned Thornton, on which may be founded the desirableness of a fortnight's delay between the date of the letter's

arrival and that of Paolo's starting, this cause must yield to a far more grave and pressing one: the probability of an illness or worse. Six days, more or less (nine days of the fatal term had elapsed by this time), cannot be of any material importance; some woman's whim, I daresay: to Paolo it is an affair of life or death.

Believing himself justified by such apprehensions, Thornton then proposed to Paolo that they should begin their journey at once, without further waiting, and Paolo grasped at the proposal as eagerly as a prisoner under sentence of death grasps at an offered respite. Their passage from Civita Vecchia was quick and horribly boisterous. Paolo, who throughout had suffered all the martyrdoms of sea-sickness, though scarcely able to stand on landing, nevertheless obstinately refused to take any rest, insisting on going on immediately to Lyons, a long and dreary journey before the two great southern cities of France were connected by a railroad. There he had to resign himself to a forced halt of a couple of hours, and *en route* again by express train to Paris, where they arrived at seven in the evening. Theirs had not been travelling, it had been a race.

Thornton, who had been often in Paris before, took Paolo to a furnished house, which he had, on such occasions, preferred to showy, noisy hotels, and where he had always found a quiet, neat, comfortable lodging, with an obliging, well-bred landlady. This house stood at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré and the Rue de Rohan; this last street destined soon to disappear in the carrying out of the enlargement and embellishment of the city of Paris, as connected with the completion of

the Louvre. Something to Thornton's disappointment, Madame Françoise, his model landlady, interspersed her welcome with various explanatory notes, as to how she, along with the other householders of the Rue de Rohau, had, consoled by a handsome indemnity, been condemned to expropriation; already, indeed, part of her movables had been transferred to another house; but there were still some rooms untouched, and, if they would suit *ce bon* Mr. Thornton, they should be at his disposal, until Madame Françoise should be served with a definite notice to evacuate the premises. While this negotiation was pending, Paolo, far too impatient to wait for its conclusion, was changing his dress in one of the still furnished rooms.

It was past nine o'clock when Paolo, having finished his hasty toilette, desired that a coach might be sent for; he was too faint and giddy to walk. In vain did Mortimer try to dissuade him from seeking the Joneses at so late an hour; Paolo was not in a frame of mind or body to listen to sober counsel. Like Manzoni's poor Renzo after his libations at the Osteria of the Mezza Luna, our young friend could do nothing by halves. Paolo's excitement, for not being caused by wine, did not the less make his blood boil in his veins. So Thornton sent for a coach, and followed Paolo into it. Paolo said he would rather pay his first visit alone.

"I don't mean to call this evening," said Mortimer; "but as you are quite a stranger to Paris, I may as well go with you to the Boulevard des Capucines. I shall leave you at the door, if the family are at home. At all events, have an address of our lodging in your pocket;" and he gave him one.

Paolo yielded the point, and away they drove.

There were more people in the streets, than the inducements of the hour well accounted for, considering the overcast sky, and the biting cold. Men and women in masquerade were sauntering hither and thither, wild shouts and yells issuing from the various groups. Hunting horns at a corner of a street, lustily answered by hunting horns from another corner, made the air ring with *fanfares*, which fell on Paolo's ears like something hellish. Strains of gay music borne on the wind, and a shuffling and trampling of feet, testified to waltzes, galopes, and whirling crowds. They passed a fine mansion, brilliantly illuminated with gas: mounted dragoons were stationed at the entrance, and regulated the advancing procession of carriages. Paolo saw flowers, and diamonds, and brilliant uniforms glittering in those equipages. Floods of music came from within. "A Walpurgis night," thought bewildered Paolo; "nothing but assembling, and feasting, and carousing all through the world. I declare they are mad, unless I am mad myself; perhaps I am; my head, I feel it, is all in a confusion. This Paris will be the death of me." Paolo was, indeed, disordered: half his thoughts he unconsciously expressed aloud.

"The majority of men are everywhere like children, who cannot bear to be left alone," observed Thornton, in a grave voice; "nothing frightens the most of them so much as a quiet *tête-à-tête* with themselves."

The sights and sounds grating so harshly on Paolo's irritated nerves, and so unaccountable to a new comer, would have been immediately understood by any one, who knew anything of Paris and its habits. Our two travellers had reached the gayest capital in the world on the 23rd of March, which happened to be the day

of mid-Lent, what the French call *La mi-Carême*. A race so mercurial, sociable, and greedy of excitement as the French, and especially the Parisians, could never go through the forty days of Lent without getting the jaundice. To avoid this danger, they cut it in half, and the day which marks the division, *i. e.* the *mi-Carême*, they make one of general rejoicing and carousing — in fact, a complete carnival compressed into the space of four-and-twenty hours. Hence the masqueraders and the fiddles, the hunting horns and the big house with its thousand lights — no other than the Ministère de la Marine, opening its salons to stars and garters, and even less distinguished mortals, among them some of Paolo's acquaintances. Who was to dream of his being in Paris on the 23rd, when his arrival at the end of March was scarcely to be expected?

And so it came to pass that he found the Jones family ready for a ball in Paris, just as, some months ago, he had found them ready for a ball in Rome. Miss Jones, in full array, now as then — bouquet, cassolette, fan, tablets, embroidered handkerchief — the coincidence was little calculated to dissipate the gloom weighing on her lover's spirits. One alteration, seen at a glance, struck him most painfully. That rich and glossy hair of hers, which, for his sake, she was to wear diadem-like, which was to be, on their first meeting, a sort of banner, as it were, of her unchanged feelings, was, alas! gathered into two large rolls right and left of her head, in obedience to the fashion of the moment. His hopes sank, and so might his legs, but for a friendly arm-chair close by, at which he caught for support. Miss Jones felt the awkwardness of the situation the more, as she could do nothing to improve it in the way of

the warm welcome prompted by her heart, in the presence of her uncle, standing there with looks of mingled suspicion and vexation. Mrs. Jones had entirely lost all presence of mind. The scene, though short and mute, did not lack meaning.

Miss Lavinia was the one to break the spell. She said how glad she was, how glad they all were, to see their kind Roman friend at Paris, and how she regretted that for this evening they could not have the pleasure of his society.

Paolo stammered out his regret for having intruded at what he saw was an unseasonable hour.

"When would he call again?" asked Lavinia.

"At midday on the morrow," said Paolo.

Mrs. Jones here said some words in a low voice to her niece, who replied,

"No, do not come to-morrow morning, we are engaged in the morning; but," added she, "come to tea at nine. It is so lucky we have no engagement for the evening. You will come?"

He said he would.

"Good-bye, and don't be later than nine," she added, with a smile.

The interview was over; it had not lasted ten minutes.

Paolo would fain have walked home, to let the bitter, icy night wind cool his hot, throbbing temples; but he felt as if his legs were weak as water. He beckoned to a coach, and, as he threw himself into it, called out "Via Babuino." The coachman declared he knew of no such street. Something of remonstrance in the man's voice forced Paolo to a mental effort, and then he recollected careful Thornton having made him

put into his waistcoat pocket a card on which was written his Paris address.

"*A la bonne heure*," says the driver, "Rue de Rohan."

As he drove along, Paolo at moments was not sure whether he was in Rome or in Paris — at moments the very consciousness of his own identity forsook him.

"How are your friends?" inquired Thornton as soon as he saw the young man.

"Quite well, very well indeed," said Paolo, taking up a candle.

"You made but a short visit," insisted Mortimer.

"Very short. Good night," said Paolo.

"Won't you take a cup of tea before you go to bed? it will refresh you."

"No, thank you, I feel perfectly well;" and this time Thornton found no more questions to ask.

Paolo went to his bed, and made, it must be confessed, so poor a night of it, that he might as well have sat up, and unburdened his heart to his good friend. Not that he was suffering acutely, either mentally or physically; no, on the contrary, there was a kind of damper on his outer and inner man, which deadened all his sensations. What harassed him most was the impossibility of sleeping, combined with the greatest desire to do so. He stumbled incessantly against the narrow bridge, which forms the boundary between vigil and sleep. Whenever he neared the longed-for end, he slipped, and startled by the shock, was wide awake again from head to foot. Towards the morning he had an hour or more of heavy slumber, haunted by painful fantastic visions.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Ball at the Hôtel de Ville.

THE reason why the ladies of the Boulevard des Capucines had put off a second visit from Paolo for four and twenty hours, was that they had been given tickets to see the reception of a new Member of the Institute; and the ceremony was to take place exactly the morning following the evening, when he had appeared in their salon as unexpectedly, and with as startling an effect, as if he had been a bomb or a Bengal light. As a rule, surprises are to be avoided — an agreeable surprise is about as rare as a black swan.

To return to the Academy of France; the speech of the newly elected member, a wit as sharp as a needle; and the speech in response of the old member, who was to receive the new one, a most eloquent atrabilarian: were expected with an intense interest, and lively curiosity, nearly allied to that of amateurs of the prize ring. Both men had been political *notabilités*; both had been the standard-bearers of opposed, now deposed dynasties; therefore both were expected to hurl at each other's head, and at the heads of their rival governments, and at the head of the government which had ousted theirs, a profusion of elegant, well-balanced contumely. Nor was the general expectation disappointed, judging by the frantic applause of the closely packed audience. To our English family it was a bore from beginning to end. Four long hours of even the choicest rhetoric are more than sufficient for those most capable of appreciating it, and the Joneses were certainly not among such: the

ladies owing to preoccupations of their own, and the gentleman from the slight knowledge of the language. Fashion has its drawbacks; but the satisfaction of being able to say, "I was at the Institute on the day of Monsieur So-and-so's public reception as an Academician, is worth buying at the cost of some *ennui*."

The Vicomte du Verlat, who had provided tickets for the family with the sweat of his brow, was there as a matter of course, and joined his English acquaintances as they were coming out. After a few minutes' talk with Miss Lavinia, he said, as he was taking leave, that he counted on the pleasure of meeting her again in the evening.

"You mean at the Hôtel de Ville," said Lavinia; "but we have received no tickets."

"No tickets?" exclaimed the vicomte. "Impossible! I saw your names down on my sister's list; there must be some mistake, which I will have set to rights."

"Pray don't," was the young lady's hasty rejoinder; "we are all tired with our constant dissipation; besides, we expect company ourselves this evening."

"Nevertheless, I hope to meet you at the ball," persisted the vicomte. "It would be a crime of lèse-nationality to miss a fête given expressly in honour of the English, and at which your lord mayor is to be present. Allow me to say *au revoir*;" and, raising his hat, the polite Frenchman went his way.

The aunt and niece were rather provoked at the vicomte's gallantry, which threatened to interfere with their quiet tea at home, and agreed to aid each other in resisting all attempts to induce them to go to the Hôtel de Ville. But there is a fate against lovers. Eight in the evening was striking, and Mrs. and Miss

Jones were just leaving the dinner-table, when Madame la Générale was announced.

"The préfet is a monster; he shall account to me for his conduct. You must go with us; the General will get admission for you. The Emperor is to be there at half-past nine, so we must not be later than nine. I am sorry, but I can allow you only three-quarters of an hour to dress. I will wait here for you; you see I am already dressed." The whole of this speech was run off in a breath.

Lavinia, thanking Madame la Générale warmly, begged to be excused; Mrs. Jones alleged that they had invited a gentleman to tea: the Générale would hear of no objection, accept no excuse. Mr. Jones now interfered by telling his wife, she was making much ado about nothing. The drawing-master could come some other evening, there was nothing to prevent their going. There are moral as well as physical impossibilities. To persist in declining an offer meant in kindness, when you cannot give your reasons for doing so, is one of the number. Mrs. Jones and Lavinia had to yield and withdraw to dress, as did Mr. Jones. The Générale remained alone in the salon, turning over the leaves of an illustrated work, but her eyes often consulting the clock on the mantelpiece.

Lavinia did not take long to dress: for the first time in her life, she cared little what she put on, or how she looked. Her maid was in ecstasies of despair at her young lady's hurry. The minutes thus saved from the three-quarters of an hour allotted by the Générale, were spent in writing a hurried note to Paolo: —

"We are going to the ball at the Hôtel de Ville. Do not, I entreat of you, be angry with me; it is not

my fault; it is against my will that I go. I am literally dragged there. You can ask my aunt. Long ago, cards of invitation were promised to us by a lady, who has been kind and attentive to us, ever since we came to Paris. Somehow or other, the tickets never came; I was very glad they did not. But this lady has come herself; she is even now waiting for us in the drawing-room, and insists on our going with her. Uncle has also insisted that we should go. It was *impossible* to say no. Indeed, it was: I will explain all the circumstances to you the first time I see you — and you will be convinced that I could not help myself. Come to morrow at twelve, pray, to tell me that you are not angry with me. They are calling for me. Adieu. Don't think ill of me. I must go.

“L. J.”

Lavinia, leaving this note to her maid, with strict injunctions to wait for Signor Mancini in the hall, and to give it into his own hands, joined the party in the drawing-room. Immediately afterwards they drove off to the Hôtel de Ville.

Paolo, under pretext of a bad headache, had remained in his room the whole day; not reading, not writing, but restlessly pacing its limits when alone, or lying on the sofa when Thornton was there. Something worse still than headache was the matter with him. He felt ill, sick, and giddy, sometimes to a degree that created a fear lest he should not be able to keep his engagement for the evening. He was painfully haunted, besides, by the idea that he should do or say something foolish if he did go, being well aware that occasionally he lost all control over his thoughts, and, to a

certain extent, over his actions. Once he found himself in the ante-room, without the slightest notion of what had taken him there. At another time he fancied he heard the bell ring, and his own name so distinctly pronounced, that he went to ask whether a letter had not been brought for him. Again he could have sworn he heard Miss Jones's voice in the passage.

It was the consciousness of these repeated hallucinations which made him anxious to avoid Thornton, and keep silent in his presence as much as he could. To satisfy his friend, he agreed to take some solid food, and a tray was brought to his room; but the moment he was alone, the meat was consigned to a closet. When urged to go out, and take a look of the Boulevards or Tuileries, he pleaded fatigue — a plausible enough excuse to pass current with Thornton, who, with all his penetration, did not unfortunately discern the effort in Paolo to appear collected. It was this same want of discernment which made Thornton, out of delicacy, not again insist on accompanying the young man to the Boulevard des Capucines.

Lavinia's maid, as she had been desired, was ready in the hall when Paolo arrived. He took the note she handed to him, and without opening it, he passed her, walking mechanically towards the drawing-room. The young woman followed, trying to make him understand by signs that no one was at home, and pointing to the letter he held in his hand. He tore it open, read the first line, "We are going to the ball at the Hôtel de Ville," paused a second, as if to take in the meaning, violently crushed the paper, and, to the indescribable terror of the poor lady's-maid, tore it with his teeth.

His look, his gesture was that of a maniac. Those few words *had* maddened him.

Down the stairs, up the street. The coach, which had taken him to the Joneses was still at the door; the coachman beckons to him. Paolo sees no one, forgets that there are such things as carriages, forgets everything, except that there is a Hôtel de Ville, and that she is at a ball there.

"The Hôtel de Ville, if you please," he asks, and on he rushes in the direction pointed out. He is neither giddy nor faint now; he has the strength of a Samson. A new-born power swells his heart, hardens his muscles, a power boundless for mischief. Oh! that this world were built on pillars, that he might drag them down, and bury all mankind under the ruins.

Out of a labyrinth of narrow and squalid streets, he emerges at last into an open square, and facing him he beholds the stately pile, its noble front a blaze of light; sentinels on foot and on horseback clearly enough mark the entrance of the palace; carriages are thronging thither. Paolo follows in the wake of the well-dressed crowd, through a vast portico, up a wide staircase, through one of the large folding doors that give access to the ball-rooms. Some one stops him here. "Your ticket, sir." Paolo hurries on like one on an errand of life and death. Several officials rush after him, overtake him, bring him back, and force him out of the precincts, tabooed to ticketless individuals. Resistance is vain, they are too many for him — ten, a hundred to one. He expostulates, entreats, raves; five minutes, but five minutes, just time enough to seek out one of the guests; to whisper one word in that guest's ear. Compliance with such a request is naturally out of all question, it

would be positive disobedience of orders; no ticket, no admittance. They remonstrate with him, humanely enough at first, these moustached figures, then begin to lose patience. "Withdraw quietly, or we shall send you to the guard-house."

At this threat, Paolo forgets that he is one against a multitude, forgets time or place; all, save that he has come to curse Lavinia, and that he will do it in spite of man or devil. He throws himself furiously against his opponents — poor delirious young man! in a second he is overpowered, and carried before the officer of the guard. Luckily for Paolo, he was a grey-haired man, who had been on duty not only at many fêtes, but on many battle-fields. Life's combats and trials had sobered this elderly man, subdued the arrogance of brief martial authority. The appearance of Paolo reminded him of his own brave lad — just such another in height and carriage — far away in Algeria. The officer puts his arm within Paolo's, and gently reasoning with him, leads him down the stairs, out into the courtyard, out into the open square, and bidding him go home quietly, leaves him there.

Paolo leans against the barrier of iron rails surrounding the huge mansion, and says to himself that there must be more ways than one to get within its walls. No sooner thought, than he sets off on a search, and, in fact, finds a back entrance. It is guarded by soldiers, as in the front; never mind. With the obstinacy of a fixed idea, he steals in, unchallenged, into the interior. With a fluttering heart he springs up a narrow staircase — his hope dies — a group of men are on this landing-place, as they were on that of the principal stair, and equally oppose his further progress.

Stopped, questioned, repulsed, he offers his purse only for one peep at the ball-room; it is indignantly refused, and once more comes the threat of the guard-house. Once more he finds himself forced back to the street, conscious only that he is foiled. He wanders round and round the building, but without aim or purpose. Stumbling against a block of stone, he drops on it exhausted.

He sat there, God knows how long, looking at the gaily illuminated façade, listening to the music, his eyes straining after the shadows thrown on the window-blinds by the dancers. He listened, and looked involuntarily, unconsciously, like one too heavy with sleep or drink to understand what he sees or hears. To the orgasm which had supported him hitherto, had succeeded a complete prostration of mind and body. His thoughts floated from object to object, indistinct, incoherent, like the visions of fever. That he was ill, and cold, and wretched past conception — that he was probably dying, and that death would be welcome, was his clearest impression; but of the why of all this wretchedness, he had now not the slightest conception.

On a sudden he was startled by a vivid flash of light in his eyes. A man was holding a lantern close to his face, and a gruff voice was ordering him to rise, and take himself away. He did try to get up, but he was unable; two men put him on his feet, and he strove to walk, but reeled like one drunk with liquor. It was the night patrol who had roused him; they laughed, calling to him that he had had enough. His mind's compass was lost, and, like a wreck, he drifted right or left at hap hazard. Shivering, and in pain, he put

up his hand to his head; his thick hair was like a mass of wet, tangled sea-weed. It was only then he perceived that rain was falling fast, that he had lost his hat, and was literally wet to the skin. The clang of a loud tolling close at hand startled him with a sense of terror; it was the hour of the night falling from the belfry of Notre Dame. Paolo raised his eyes; above him towered a dark mass, which, as he looked, seemed to totter threateningly forwards. He rushed from under the shadow on to a bridge, saw water flowing below, and stopped to wonder and consider whether it could be the Tiber. At the other end of the street, beyond the bridge, a large red ball of fire attracted his attention; he felt fascinated by it, made straight towards it, then — red lamp, and every other thing, even to the last glimmering of consciousness, vanished. He lay senseless on the pavement.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The good Samaritans.

THE glare which had attracted unlucky Paolo, proceeded from a large lamp of red glass, placed in front of a very low shabby house of two stories, that is, of a ground floor surmounted by a garret, one of those ugly interruptions occurring in a long handsome line of buildings, like a warning to the passers-by of the existence of poverty and toil. The red lamp indeed denoted one of those humble establishments, so precious to the less wealthy portion of the community, at which omnibuses stop, to take up or put down passengers, and where correspondence tickets for all parts of Paris may be had for threepence, one of the great improvements of civilization, economising the artisan's and workman's time and strength.

A little man in a lamentably conditioned dressing gown, his little body half out of the garret window, immediately above the waiting room of the said bureau, was in the act of extinguishing, by the aid of a short stick, the red lamp beneath, when Paolo fell heavily on the pavement.

"Bless my soul," exclaimed the little man, "some one has dropped down close to our door."

"Drunk, I dare say," replied the voice of a woman, coming apparently from some recess within the garret chamber. "Shut the window at once, Prosper, it is desperately cold."

"Drunk or not drunk," observed good-naturedly the

said Prosper, as he obeyed the order to shut the window, "the wet pavement is no bed for one of God's creatures in this bitter night; one would not willingly leave a dog there. I'll go and see." And quickly descending what was more like a ladder than a staircase, he opened the door of the office, went where Paolo was lying, and stooping to the level of the prostrate figure's face, after a few seconds of examination, exclaimed, "He is not drunk, poor fellow, but ill; perhaps he's subject to fits. Holla! Prudence, come, and give me a hand."

This request was addressed to a female clothed in a woollen petticoat and jacket, who had followed on Prosper's heels, as a good and curious wife should always do, and was standing shivering on the threshold of her home. Prudence without hesitation stepped out, and husband and wife struggled to lift Paolo's inanimate form, a task, however, to which they were unequal. "We might as well try to move the Colonne Vendôme," said the panting little Prosper; "he'd do for a cuirassier of the guard. I must fetch Benoît."

Benoît was Prosper's godfather and acknowledged Mentor, a man who knew everything, could do everything, and was always and inevitably right. He lived at some baths near at hand, where he ruled supreme over the vapour and douches department. Mr. Prosper hobbled along a little way in a straight line, turned into a narrow lane to the left, then into a narrow lane to the right, stopped at a window with shutters, in the centre of which was a loophole protected by an iron grating. Here Mr. Prosper knocked a *réveille* with his knuckles, calling loudly on Benoît.

"*Présent*," growled a husky voice within, followed

by a shuffling of slippers, which seemed to indicate that the owner of the husky voice was coming to answer the summons; when, all of a sudden, the shuffling ceased, and was succeeded by a brisk stamping of feet, and angry bursts of "One — two — three — floored — *quoi?*"

"Come, come," urged Prosper, familiar with the amiable weakness of Benoît, who was for ever at quarte and tierce with an imaginary foe, "you can finish him to-morrow; just now, we want you at the shop; make haste, I can't wait for you;" and Prosper limped away, but was overtaken almost immediately by Benoît. The combined strength of the trio enabled them to half drag, half carry Paolo into the waiting-room, and lay him on the floor. Prudence fastened the outer door, and then ran upstairs for a pillow. Benoît scrutinized the still insensible form with an intensely wise and critical air, and Prosper examined Benoît with the devoted look of a dog at his master.

"It is a case of cholera," dogmatically pronounced Benoît.

"Cholera!" exclaimed husband and wife, turning the colour of ashes.

"Of cholera," repeated Benoît: "don't you see how black he is becoming in the face? and how stiff and cold his lower limbs are? The blood is frozen up to the young fellow's waist, I tell you. As soon as his heart freezes, there's an end of him."

"God have mercy on us all," said the woman; "we can't keep him here, the children will catch it and die; he must go to the hospital, do you hear, Prosper? It is only a step; *allons donc*."

"Ah, very well," said Benoît; "then the boy's

dead — dead, I say, twice over before you get him admitted. I know their ways. Ten minutes of a vapour douche at my place, and he is cured — cured I say; but I have no fire, and no fire no vapour, and there's an end of it."

"But, but, what then do you advise, *parrain*?" asked Prosper, with an appealing look at Benoît.

"Advise, hein? — why, that we do our best, and — — *à la garde de Dieu*," quoth Benoît. "You two bring down a mattress, and put some sticks in the stove, while I run to my place. We shall want plenty of hot water presently."

The mattress was ready, and the wood was crackling in the wretched stove, when Benoît returned. He had some difficulty this time in making good his entrance, so enormously was his bulk increased by the amount of blankets, which, to carry more conveniently, he had wrapped round his person. Necessity in this case had been the mother of invention, for, holding in one hand a black bottle, in the other a big scrubbing-brush, and in his mouth a short *brûle-gueule* unlit indeed, but out of which he sent puffs of imaginary smoke: how otherwise could he have brought the blankets?

"There," said he, shaking off his cumbrous envelope, and making a feint or two at the wall with the scrubbing-brush, "we must make our invalid a bed fit for a Christian to lie on;" and he began spreading the blankets on the mattress. "Ha, ha, but not here, now that I think of it, or we shall have to shift his quarters in the morning — *mon Dieu!* what it is to have a head on one's shoulders. Better take him into your *salle-à-manger*, out of the way of your customers."

Without waiting for any assent, Benoît snatched up mattress and blankets, and forthwith carried them into what he had dignified into a *salle-à-manger*, but which in fact was kitchen and hall for the family. The waiting-room, or "shop," as Benoît called it invariably, this kitchen, and two garret rooms, constituted Mr. Prosper's dwelling.

"Now, for the boy himself," cried Benoît; "take his feet, *pilleul*; — no, no, madame, this is not woman's work; my godson and I can manage it." But Prudence, whether better acquainted with her husband's powers, or from the indomitable charity of a woman's heart, forgot her fears of infection, and insisted on lending a hand to carry the "boy," and lay him gently on the mattress, first divesting him of his wet garments. Benoît, in his glory, then administered a professional rubbing that might have forced heat into marble, after which he wrapped Paolo in all the blankets, placed bottles full of hot water to his feet and to his back, and poured down his throat, spoonful by spoonful, a considerable dose of hot cognac and water. When all this had been accomplished, Benoît went and sat down by the stove, lighted his pipe, and now filling the room with real volumes of pungent vapour, gravely watched for the effects of his curative method on his patient.

Let us have patience enough for Benoît's simple story. Benoît was what is called an *enfant de Paris*. He had enlisted at the age of eighteen, and seen a good deal of active service both in France and Algeria. He had risen to the rank of sergeant, and the stripes on his sleeve would have been exchanged for the golden epaulettes on the shoulder, had Benoît not been so illiterate. His skill as a swordsman had made him

respected and feared throughout his military career, and caused him to be appointed *maître d'armes* to his regiment, a fact which explains his fencing monomania. At forty he had obtained his discharge, and settling in Paris, he had ever since been a sort of jack-of-all-trades. Prosper, his godson, had met the ex-sergeant in a moment when the latter's fortunes were at a very low ebb. The good-natured little fellow had assisted his godfather as far as his means allowed, and by dint of seeking and being in earnest, had succeeded in finding the employment, tolerably lucrative, if not enviable, which that worthy now fulfilled at a thermal establishment close by; — we say *not enviable*, because Benoît's duties involved the necessity of living in a temperature of between 110 degs. and 120 degs. Fahrenheit.

This timely service had strengthened the ties, rather loose hitherto, between godfather and godson. There was nothing that Benoît would not do for Prosper, as there was nothing that Prosper would not do for Benoît. Benoît was actuated by gratitude, Prosper by admiration. Benoît had all the strong and the weak points of a trooper; he was serviceable, generous, warm-hearted, but hot-headed, touchy, despotic and intolerant; ready to share his last crust with an old comrade, or to cut that comrade's throat on the slightest provocation. In personal appearance, Benoît was tall, lean, sinewy; time had thinned his flowing locks, but he balanced their loss by wearing enormous grey moustaches, and a large tuft on his chin. Though upwards of fifty, his strength and activity were proverbial in the neighbourhood; first baked by the sun in Africa, and then boiled by the steam of the Paris establishment of baths, in which he now lived, he had

—

become equally impervious to cold and heat. The prominent items of his costume in all seasons, consisted of a pair of slippers, a blouse, and a long apron. In the same clothes in which he administered a *douche* at the temperature of 40 degs. Réaumur, he would walk out in the street when the thermometer was at 15 degs. below zero. Such was the strange doctor assigned by fate to Paolo.

At last, after more than an hour of perfect insensibility, Paolo began to give some signs of returning animation, first by a series of stifled moans, then by repeated but weak efforts to rid himself of his load of covering, and to change his position. Any one, except a man so obstinate and self-conceited as Benoît, would have understood these manifestations of discomfort; on the contrary, the ex-sergeant welcomed every one of these movements, by digging his elbow into poor little Prosper's sides, chuckling with triumph, and exclaiming now and then, "Do you see, the blood is thawing; well done, *mon garçon*, — a little faster if you can." As if in obedience to this wish, "my boy's" pulse went at a racing gallop, until Benoît would fain have slackened the speed, had he known how. Paolo's feeble attempts at motion soon changed into a constant jerk from right to left, from left to right. The more the restless sufferer strove to throw the blankets from him, the more strenuously did Benoît insist on covering him.

By four in the morning Paolo had become almost unmanageable, either sitting bolt upright, staring round him with bloodshot eyes, or springing off the mattress in a way, which the united exertions of the three persons present could scarcely control. When things had come to this pass, Prudence, notwithstanding her habi-

tual reverence for Benoît, proposed that one of them should fetch Mr. Perrin. Prosper said "Ay," and Benoît "No," grounding his opposition on his experience of cholera, as great or greater than that of Mr. Perrin. Mr. Perrin had never been out of Paris. What more could Mr. Perrin do than he, Benoît, had done? But Prudence was not to be pacified without Mr. Perrin, so Benoît yielded with a significant shrug of the shoulders, saying, "Let the woman have her way." Without further remark, Prudence put on a faded tartan shawl and went to seek Mr. Perrin.

Mr. Perrin was one of the resident physicians (*internes*) of the Hôtel Dieu, who visited much among the poor in that neighbourhood, and was deservedly most popular in the class, from which he had himself sprung. The son of a postman, he was familiar with the hardships, the wants, the peculiar language of what are called the lower orders, and was always ready at their bidding. This good man had come out of Nature's hand short, thin, sickly, sallow, and so shortsighted that he could not see the top of his own nose without spectacles. Early deprivations, and the daily sight of human misery, had rendered him grey, grim, withered, old before his time.

The Hôtel Dieu was not more than one minute's walk from Prosper's bureau, being in fact, exactly opposite. As soon as he heard Prudence's story, Mr. Perrin begged one of his colleagues to take his place in case of need, put on his overcoat, and in less time than it takes to say so, was standing by Paolo's sick bed, watch in hand, his experienced finger interrogating the rapid pulse, his look grave and inscrutable, like that of Destiny itself.

"He is half smothered," observed Mr. Perrin, relieving the sick man of all but one of the numerous blankets.

"Is it — cholera?" asked Prudence.

"Cholera? nonsense," said the physician. "You dream of nothing but cholera. I almost wish it was. This is a case of cerebral congestion, brought on by God knows what, heightened and helped by brandy, and blankets, and hot bottles. I want a basin, and a pair of scissors."

Even Benoit was cowed by the doctor's earnest manner, and swallowed the protest which rose on his lips against this fiat.

Mr. Perrin, with lancet in hand, said to Prudence, who brought him the basin and scissors, —

"Now, madame, take a basket and a tumbler with you, if you please, and go to the surgery of the Hôtel Dieu, ask for a couple of dozen of leeches, and eight kilos of ice. Say it is for Dr. Perrin; you needn't pay — just now."

By the time that Prudence came back with the leeches and the ice, the patient had been bled — a difficult task it had been to keep him still for that purpose, he raved so — and all his fine hair had also been cut off. The doctor wrapped some of the ice in a cloth, and applied it to Paolo's head, giving directions at the same time that similar applications should be unremittingly continued.

"As to the leeches," he went on, "if the gentleman is not quieter in two hours, which is not very likely, put a dozen behind each ear. You'll put them on at seven," he added, consulting his watch. "I shall be

here at eight, and, if it be possible, we will have him removed to the hospital."

"With your leave, doctor," inquired Prudence, "is this cerebral combustion anything catching?"

"Not in the least," replied Mr. Perrin, with a smile; "why do you ask?"

"Because," explained Prudence, with some embarrassment, "if there is no danger for the children, we could nurse the poor fellow here very well."

"Thought and spoken like a good woman, and a true woman," said the doctor, with another smile, which made him look quite young and handsome; "but you must consider, madame, that this young man's malady, though not infectious, may have other serious consequences for you: first, it may end fatally —"

"I am sure it will not," put in Prudence.

"And secondly," pursued the doctor, "supposing, as you say, he recovers, his illness is certain to be long, troublesome, and expensive."

"As to time, I have plenty of that to give," urged Prudence; "as to money —"

"Well, we have not much to boast of in that way," says Prosper, striking into the conversation, "but we have a little credit, and —"

"And some friends," growled Benoît, significantly.

"We'll discuss the matter further by and by," said Mr. Perrin. "In the meantime, don't forget to use the ice freely, and, if he is not better, the leeches at seven, twelve behind each ear: *à bientôt*. By the by," said the doctor, returning, "let me see the young man's clothes."

They were produced by Prudence. The doctor inspected them, with a view to the identification of his

patient, but no clue of the sort came of the inspection; there was neither card-case nor pocket-book, nor letters, nor purse, in the pockets — nothing but a white handkerchief marked P., and a pair of black gloves. The only conclusion Mr. Perrin was able to draw from the fineness of the linen, and the cut and stuff of the clothes, was that this unexpected customer of his was what is called a gentleman.

Paolo's restlessness, which had abated a little in consequence of the bleeding, having reappeared long before the hour of seven, Benoît, who was really a capital hand at dressing of wounds and all that sort of thing, had recourse to the leeches, but with an air of gloomy incredulity, meant to express "all time lost."

The cold gray March morning's light, which was now beginning to peep into the *salle-à-manger* of the omnibus establishment, gave the signal of retreat to the ruler of the neighbouring vapour and douche department. He went, uttering those peculiar ominous sounds of the lips, with which people mark their apprehensions. Prosper on his side, was taking down the shutters, and preparing for an active day after an active night, when in came Mr. Perrin again. He seemed rather satisfied with the state of his patient, and said nothing more of his removal.

The doctor called twice during the day, and again in the evening, bleeding Paolo at his first and last visit. Very grave and thoughtful Mr. Perrin looked. Prudence never left the sick room, and Prosper spent there all the shreds of time, and they were not many, which the exigencies of his calling left at his disposal. If Benoît rushed over once for news, he must have done so at least fifty times. Though he was to relieve Pros-

per's watch at three in the morning, behold him in the "shop" at near midnight, the hour when he had a right to consider himself released from the service of the public. Gradually, as the day had waned, so had his suspicious, dissatisfied mood insensibly merged into the patronising, with a good dash of the maudlin, witness the mysterious assumption of importance, with which he drew Prosper into a corner, and dropped a dirty paper ball containing three napoleons into his hand, and the burst of sensibility, which caused him in so doing to lay his head on Prosper's shoulder, and with sobs to exclaim, —

"It will serve for his burial, poor boy, it will serve for his burial."

Prosper silently pocketed the money, perceiving from the combined flavour of tobacco, and *petits verres*, exhaling from his worthy godfather's lips, that he had reached that stage of concentrated self-will, when a word of contradiction would have driven the old soldier to frenzy.

When her husband closed the bureau, Prudence went to take some rest in her garret, and Prosper laid himself down on a paillasse at the foot of the sick man's mattress. And now we may as well leave this scene of suffering and benevolence for a while, with the less fear of any untoward accident occurring in our absence, that Paolo is by far too interesting a personage in our story, to be conveniently spared before the end.

END OF VOL. I.

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VOL. II.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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L A V I N I A.

CHAPTER I.

Search.

WE must now go back to the night of Paolo's second visit to the Joneses. When at half-past eleven he had not returned, Thornton began to feel uneasy lest his young friend should have lost his way in the huge city. Nothing more natural than that Paolo, in the state of pre-occupation in which he was, should have forgotten the name of the street where he lodged, and, supposing that he had not lost it, forgotten that he was carrying his address written down on a card in his waistcoat pocket. After all, he may be still with those people, soliloquized Thornton; they keep late hours, and, in all probability, they had other visitors beside Paolo. No doubt he is there: however, the shortest way to certainty is to go and see.

First informing Madame Françoise of his intention, and begging her not to sit up for him herself, Thornton departed. One o'clock was striking as he stepped out of a citadine at 25, Boulevard des Capucines; he rang the bell and made straight for the porter's lodge. Monsieur the concierge was snoring in his bed, madame his spouse taking a nap in a large arm-chair.

"Monsieur et Madame Jones, if you please?"

Madame la concierge was out of sorts, of course, as all Parisian concierges are always, but more especially after midnight, and knew of no such name as Jones.

"Pardon," said Mortimer, fumbling in his pocket, "I mean an English family."

"We have but one," grumbled the female cerberus; "a pretty time to pay visits."

"Monsieur is too gracious," coo'd the worthy matron, on receipt of a five-franc piece. "I am at monsieur's service. If all the world were like monsieur! but they are not reasonable, indeed they aren't."

"An English family consisting of three persons," resumed Mortimer; "a tall gentleman upwards of forty —"

"And a short elderly lady, as round as a ball," interrupted the portress; — "Madame Jonasse — I know them, I know them; second floor above the entresol. Always late, just come in."

"Have they been out?" inquired Mortimer, breathless with surprise.

"It is their rule, monsieur; and a pretty fuss they made both in going out and coming in, with this into the bargain, that they brought the fat one home in a swoon."

"A young gentleman must have called on them about nine o'clock. Pray," continued Thornton, almost beseechingly — "pray try and recollect whether it was before or after they went out."

"Nobody came for the Jonasses this evening, except a lady — Madame la Générale, — what's her name? She came to fetch them apparently, for they all set off together. I am positive I drew the cordon for

no gentleman, young or old; perhaps Antoine did. I say, Antoine, *mon ami* —”

Mortimer begged the porter's lady not to trouble her snoring husband, she had told him pretty nearly all that he cared to know. His heart foreboded some disaster, as he ran up the stairs to the second floor. He forgot all the awkwardness of calling up a family of strangers at that hour. He had scarcely touched the bell before the door opened.

“Is that the doctor?” cried a voice from within; and before Mortimer had taken two steps forward into the anteroom, out rushed Miss Jones from a door opposite. “Oh, Mr. Thornton,” she exclaimed, “what of Signor Paolo?”

“I came here to put the same question to you,” said Thornton. “He has not returned to the hotel.”

“Not returned to the hotel? You don't know where he is?” and Lavinia wrung her hands.

“I don't know where he is,” said Thornton. “Have you not seen him? Surely, you waited for him at home.”

“I didn't, I could not,” replied the poor girl; “I left a note to explain everything to him. My maid says he read it, did not speak a word, but went away in a sort of hurry, and looking angry.”

Thornton, with a gesture of terror, exclaimed, —

“What folly, what cruelty! you don't know what you have done.”

“Oh! Mr. Thornton, don't speak to me in that way just now; don't, for God's sake, upbraid me. It is all come upon me at once. Aunt is so ill.”

A violent pull at the bell interrupted the speakers.

This time it was the doctor in company with the man who had gone in search of him.

"Don't go away till I come back," said Lavinia to Thornton, as she showed the physician into Mrs. Jones's room.

Thornton sat down to wait, trying hard to think of some clue as to where Paolo could have gone. It might be, that under the smart of bitter disappointment, Paolo had walked straight before him, without thinking of where he was going, seeking relief in movement; and in that moment he most likely lay somewhere exhausted; it might be that, in an access of despair — Thornton shrunk from clearly articulating, even in thought, the last hypothesis, which suggested itself to him. Paolo's fate would depend on the degree of excitement under which he might have been labouring, and Thornton lacked the data on which to ground any adequate estimate of his poor friend's previous state of mind. Bitterly did he reproach himself for having allowed the Italian, a stranger to Paris, and in such peculiar circumstances, to go out alone at night.

Miss Jones returned to the anteroom more discomposed than when she had left it. The doctor had tried in vain to restore Mrs. Jones's consciousness; he was now about to have recourse to bleeding her in the foot. Lavinia had but a minute to spare. Mortimer made the most of it, to put questions and elicit answers. Thus he learned much that we already know, but to him quite new; for instance, the *contretemps* which had attended Paolo's first visit, and the shock he had then received. Lavinia also told him, more at length, the description her maid had given her of Paolo's manner when the note was handed to him; first, as if he did

not comprehend what he was to do with it, his mute rage when he did read it, and the wild look in his eyes, when he turned away into the street. All this formed a chain of evidence so decisive in Thornton's opinion, that he could not restrain the exclamation of, "Then it's all over with him."

"Don't say so; don't say so, for pity's sake," implored the distracted girl; "how can you be sure he is not waiting at your hotel?"

Thornton took compassion on her, and feigned a hope that he did not entertain, or, to speak more to the point, believed he did not entertain. There was no time for further discussion. Upon the understanding that any fresh information which might reach either of them should be immediately communicated to the other, they separated.

Thornton had the moral certainty that he should not find Paolo waiting for him; he would not have hesitated to have wagered his fortune, his life, that he should not find him; and yet, when his anticipation was realized, his heart sank within him, just the same as if it had been full to the brim with the most sanguine expectations. Having read in his troubled looks, that he was uneasy at his young friend's protracted absence, his landlady had sat up for him, in spite of his request to the contrary. Thornton was too thankful now to have some one to advise with, not to confess that he had been on a fruitless errand, together with such circumstances of the case, as might justify his fears, without, as he supposed, compromising any third person. Madame Françoise was not a woman for nothing; she divined all that Thornton withheld, but with more than usual discretion kept her discovery to herself, while she

gave solid, good advice. Two o'clock in the morning is not the hour best calculated to institute inquiries about missing friends; however, madame recollected having heard, that at the prefecture of police, there was a *bureau de permanence*, that is, an office kept open all night for the convenience of such persons as might happen to require instantaneous help from the municipal powers. Mortimer grasped eagerly at this information, and, accompanied by Madame Françoise, he set out at once for the prefecture of police.

It was not without difficulty that they were admitted within its gloomy precincts, and even after that was accomplished, it was only by dint of perseverance in questioning every policeman on watch, that they at last obtained the necessary directions how to reach the office they were in search of. The prefecture of police, be it observed, independently of the associations it evokes, has, or rather had, a particular frown of its own, which is anything but attractive, even in the glare of day. By the lurid light of flickering gas-lamps, on a stormy night in March, it was forcibly suggestive of Limbos, and Dantesque bolgias, — an illustration of darkness visible. Mortimer felt his blood grow chill in his veins, as he bethought him that Paolo might have been taken up as a vagabond, and might possibly be in one of yonder cells with iron gratings. A low archway was pointed out to Thornton and his companion, and they were told that, passing through it, they would find themselves opposite to a door, which door gave access to the *bureau de permanence*. Following these directions, they were speedily in a spacious room, so faintly illuminated, that the eye required some time to get accustomed to the semi-obscurity, in order to discern that

the three or four heaps strewed over the floor were so many human beings. Lying at full length on wooden inclined planes, or *lits de camp*, these human beings were, in fact, *sergens de ville*, one of whom asked the intruders their business there, and on being told that they desired to speak to the police inspector for the night, once more asked if the case was one that pressed. Mortimer having replied in the affirmative, the *sergent* who had been spokesman, got up, knocked at a door, went in, and returning almost instantly, bid the two visitors enter.

A military-looking gentleman, whose rather disordered attire, and half awakened appearance, testified to interrupted slumbers, was seated at a table, on which stood conspicuous a capacious ledger. His features would have been commonplace, but for the eyes, which were intensely quick and searching. He motioned his visitors to seats, and listened to Thornton's short statement in unbroken silence, then said, —

"Have you any positive reason for believing that the young man in question meditated self-destruction?"

Mortimer hesitated an instant, then replied, that positive reason he had not, but that he knew the young man to be capable at a given moment of taking any, and extreme resolutions into the bargain.

"I don't ask of what he may be capable or not at a given moment," observed the sharp-eyed officer; "my question is, has he been, to your knowledge, actually contemplating suicide?"

Mortimer recoiled from entering on the multiplicity of details, and the sort of dissection of Paolo's heart, which alone could have given the police superintendent a clue to the probable frame of the missing young

man's mind on leaving the Boulevard des Capucines, and replied, —

"I cannot take upon me to say that I believe he had any such intention when he parted from me."

"Then," subjoined the night inspector, "I cannot consider this a case of emergency, or one in which delay might be fatal. We are here only for such. A few hours' absence could never justify my putting the public force in motion. Paris swarms with places, in which a young man may spend a night with no other danger than to his purse and health. If we were to humour the alarms of parents or other relatives, natural enough, to be sure, though nine times in ten groundless, there would be no end of useless trouble provided for us. The line must be drawn somewhere. Should this young man not return home to-morrow, renew your application before evening, and you will receive, in the ordinary course of business, such assistance as we can afford." So saying, the night inspector rose, and civilly bowed his visitors away. The Parisian is essentially polite, and, let it be said to his honour, whenever he is forced to meet a request with a refusal, or communicate anything little agreeable to hear, rarely aggravates the annoyance by any omission in point of form.

Thornton never closed his eyes that night, and went much earlier than necessary to renew his application at a particular office, which had been pointed out to him as the one most eligible for his business. He wrote down, as desired, the name and description of the missing Paolo, the last place he knew he had been at, gave his own name and actual place of abode, and received the assurance that all possible diligence should be used in tracing out Mr. Mancini, and in con-

veying to the applicant Mr. Thornton whatever information might be gathered.

Thornton offered money as a stimulant for the search, but his offer was declined for the present; perhaps, at a later stage of the proceedings, he was told, he might be called on to defray some extraordinary expenses. He was advised also to advertise his missing friend in the newspapers, a step of which he had already bethought himself.

From the prefecture of police, he repaired, at Madame Françoise's suggestion, to an agency of publicity in the Place de la Bourse, where an article was concocted and immediately sent for publication to the leading newspapers, embodying the name, country and personal description of the missing individual, concluding with the promise of a large reward to any one who should convey to Rue de Rohan, No. 1, any information that should lead to a discovery.

Thornton went next, God knows with what heart, to the Morgue, and, by means of a handsome gratuity to the president of that lugubrious establishment, secured the certainty of an immediate summons, should anybody be brought there whose appearance in the least corresponded with the description he left. Madame Françoise accompanied the English gentleman on all these expeditions, being most especially useful in smoothing away, with her womanly tact, that host of minor difficulties, and microscopic jarrings, which a man of Thornton's misanthropic turn, little relying, and not caring to dissemble how little, on the benevolence of his fellow-creatures, could not fail to create for him.

Having thus done all that his judgment suggested, Mortimer drove back, wearied and worn out, body and

mind alike, to the hotel, where he found a note from Miss Lavinia awaiting him. It said, —

“Aunt has recovered her consciousness, but lost her speech: judge of my state. I know not what to answer to her anxious looks — mute inquiries I am sure they are about Signor Mancini; your silence tells me clearly that you have got no clue yet. I entreat you, in common charity, to come to me. I long to know what you have done, what you hope, what you fear. I am so miserable that I feel entitled even to your indulgence.

“L. J.”

Thornton went to her, and, heart-broken as he was, tried to comfort her. He had all but detested her in her days of flightiness and successful beauty; repentant and bowed down, he felt for her. Thornton had less in him of the misanthropist than he believed.

Thus days and weeks passed on with little or no change. Mortimer called every day at the Boulevard des Capucines; was shortly admitted to the sick chamber, and arranged a tolerably probable story about Paolo, a sudden call to Rome, connected with the sale of his great picture of Brennus — which the invalid's enfeebled state of mind thankfully accepted for truth. Mrs. Jones, in fact, had had a stroke of palsy, her left side was paralyzed, and her mental powers were also slightly affected. For the rest, she was going on as favourably as could be hoped, and had partially recovered her speech. Paolo's fate continued an impenetrable mystery. Thornton caused copies of the advertisement inserted in the newspapers, to be separate-

ly printed in huge letters, and placarded far and wide over the walls of Paris; he set detectives to work, paying them liberally, and further stimulating their zeal by the promise of a fabulous *pourboire* in the event of success. All was to no purpose. He received indeed an avalanche of written communications, most of them circulars from different trades-people or associations, who, putting to profit the knowledge of his address, urged on him, the one their merchandise, the other their shares. However, of the correspondence that was anonymous, some nine out of ten of the notes bore reference at least to the subject of the advertisement. One was to the effect, that if Thornton would go on such a day, at such an hour, to such a place, he would hear all about the frightful tragedy; another was to the purport, that if a bank-note of twenty pounds were sent by post to such an address, the writer of the letter would call on the advertiser, and conduct him to the house where the missing youth was forcibly detained; a third gave the information that the young Roman had been seen last near the Forest de Bondy riding on a broomstick, and so on. There are wits so witty that every circumstance affords a field for their talents. After a few fruitless essays made in person, Thornton, as advised, handed to the police all such communications, out of which, of course, nothing came.

Thornton's spirits sank under the futility of his every effort; indeed, the intensity of his depression, after the departure of the Joneses for England, fairly frightened Madame Françoise. Mrs. Jones, ever since her last attack of illness, had never ceased sighing for England, as if England were to be her panacea. No sooner did the physicians withdraw their veto to her

travelling, than the family set off for London. Great as the deprivation was for Mortimer, it bore still harder on Lavinia, who, as the prospect before her darkened apace, grew every day more alive to the value of a real friend, the more precious too that Thornton was also *his* friend. Thornton, on his side, lost in Lavinia the only creature that suited him in his forlorn condition, the only heart that could sympathize in full with him, the only safety-valve from his lapsing into despair. Lavinia gone, he felt alone in the world.

Madame Françoise watched with daily increasing disquietude his haggard looks, his long fits of absence of mind, his starts of feverish, useless activity, and by-and-by a terror seized upon her lest he should lose his reason. So greatly had his misery impressed her, that when the long-expected notice to quit her premises within a week, was served on her, the good woman had not the courage to abandon him to himself, and at once resolved to put off to a better time the realization of her cherished plan of going to live with her married daughter at Evreux. Instead of that, she secured comfortable apartments for Mr. Thornton and herself at a lady friend's, who kept a *maison garni* in the Rue Neuve des Augustins. As soon as they were installed there, new advertisements and new placards were printed and issued, in order to give the advertiser's new address. The police also, the man in charge of the Morgue, and Miss Jones, now in London, were duly informed of the change. Mortimer did all this scrupulously but without any spirit, like one who discharges a duty for conscience-sake, but hopes no result from it.

CHAPTER II.

Paolo's Progress.

It is mortifying and appalling to think how little may suffice to defeat the best-laid scheme. Here is a case in point. The combined resources of a well organized police, and of a system of publicity, spreading the knowledge of a fact far and wide through every grade of the population, the two great engines and contrivances of modern civilization, kept at bay, or rather put to nought by one or two insignificant circumstances, which an adept in the calculation of probabilities would have disdained to cast up in his reckoning. Thus it now and then happens that a machine, most ingeniously devised on the most irrefragable principles, does not answer in practice: owing to what? — to a slight friction which has been overlooked.

Prosper and his wife saw no daily paper. Benoît, scarcely able to spell, never resorted to reading. Mr. Perrin, the only person about Paolo likely to interest himself in the news of the day, had systematically given up all periodicals, save those of his craft, which had no advertisements but medical ones. Thus far newspapers had no hold on our hero's surroundings. Nor had placards any better chance with people who, like the omnibus check-taker and his wife, never left their domicile either by night or day, and in whose immediate neighbourhood, supposing them occasionally to have strayed into the street, no bills were or could be put up; for the suite of shops on either side of Mr. Prosper's establishment, and the low parapet opposite,

that is, on the side overlooking the river, afforded no space for the labours of the bill-sticker. Prosper's establishment, if the reader recollects, was situated on the Quai Montebello, opposite Notre Dame. Mr. Perrin, when out of doors, was constantly preoccupied with the cases of his patients, and, above all, too short-sighted to have noticed the huge sheets of printed paper, even had they been half as large again; and as to Benoît, his five minutes' walk from what he called his "den" to Prosper's "shop," lay through narrow unfrequented lanes, where nothing but the internal interests of those lanes ever excited attention. Remained that quickest and surest conductor of all news, the unrivalled trumpeter, gossip; but indulgence in gossip, whether actively or passively, presupposes leisure, and life was such a continual race to each and all of Paolo's attendants, more especially since he had fallen among them, that they had no time to spare for gossip, even without taking into account a circumstance which had closed their lips against the but too natural itching to impart confidentially, each to a few bosom friends, the portentous intelligence of the handsome stranger picked up in the street, and ever since the tenant of Mr. Prosper's back parlour. —

During his first and second night under that Samaritan's roof, Paolo had raved a good deal in an unfamiliar jargon, which Benoît had oracularly pronounced to be Polish, but which the better informed Mr. Perrin declared to be Italian. Now Benoît had been quartered at Pont du Var in 1833, and with his own eyes had beheld many an Italian come from the opposite shore to seek a refuge on French soil. Benoît had served in Africa, and there known more than one Italian refugee

in the foreign legion. Benoît had also got acquainted in Paris with Italian exiles; and whether in Paris, Algeria, or the Pont du Var, had invariably seen them roughly handled, narrowly watched by the police, now and then sent to prison, or unceremoniously despatched to the nearest frontier under an escort of gendarmes. Benoît's experience on this particular matter had crystallized itself into two distinct axioms: first, that Italian and refugee were one and the same thing; second, that the police had permanent orders to track out Italians, with a view to their expulsion or imprisonment. Applying his profound wisdom to Paolo's case, Benoît, after various thrusts at his imaginary adversary, addressed the following short and striking oration to Prosper and his wife, —

"*Motus!* the lad is an Italian; you know what that means; shut up your lips, or, '*eré nom*, we shall have the police and all the *bataclan* down on us here."

The matter had been referred on the morrow to Mr. Perrin, who had shrugged his shoulders without saying yes or no. As the proverb, "Silence is acquiescence," was known to the applicants, they all accordingly held their tongues. Thus it came to pass, that, chance aiding and abetting, police, newspapers, placards, and even the clangor of gossip's big trumpet, were set at defiance. Paolo's whereabouts continued hid as if it were a crime.

The hand-to-hand struggle between fever and the lancet was long and fierce, and more than once did the doctor's leaden-coloured face, on the reappearance of symptoms supposed to be conquered, turn of a cadaverous green. When the enemy was at length put to flight, it left behind a ruin, a wreck, a corpse you

would say, but for that thin vapour issuing from his lips on the mirror, the only proof of yet unsuspended vitality. For fully three weeks life oscillated and flickered like a torch in the wind; after that it began to burn slowly but regularly again. Paolo was declared out of danger, another fortnight, and he had entered the phase of convalescence.

One of the inevitable consequences of any acute disease which has its seat in the brain, is that of a period, more or less long and intense, according to the duration and intensity of the disorder — a period, we say, of torpidity and sluggishness in the cerebral sensorium, and the functions dependent on it, which sometimes amounts to temporary imbecility. Such was the case with Paolo. Life was certainly fast regaining its hold of him, but animal life alone; the sentient being, the Psyche, lay still asleep. He would sit up on his bed, and for hours stare vacantly at the wall, chequered by some stray sunbeam, or play with the children, as thoughtless and unconcerned as a child himself. Whenever Prudence, Prosper, Benoît, or Mr. Perrin came into his room, he always smiled good-naturedly, but never spoke unless first spoken to, and then only in monosyllables, never asked questions, never evinced the least sign of surprise or curiosity at the strangeness of the place he was in. The only occurrences which appeared to arouse his interest, were his meals, which he ate with great relish. When able to leave his bed, he would sit for half the day in an arm-chair at the window of the back room, and watch with the same mute delight the manœuvres of a sparrow, or the movements of Benoît, lording it over baths and douches at the bottom of the court-yard opposite, and looking, as he moved amid

thick volumes of smoke, much like a droll representation of a half-marine, half-infernal deity.

See him next by the side of Prosper's official desk, promoted to the stirring joys of the waiting room, and ready to applaud the bustle of the scene.

"It's like a sea-port, is it not?" chuckles the little omnibus official, nudging the invalid; "no wonder there's such a competition; find me another conveyance, combining cheerfulness, comfort and speed, ready to take you to *any* part of the town at any moment of the day or night. You'll see it yourself as soon as you are strong enough for a drive; and remember the company is always respectable — lawyers, physicians, merchants, employés, rentiers, not to speak of people of rank like that grey-haired gentleman opposite, with a red rosette in his button-hole — an officer of the Legion of Honour, very likely a general in plain clothes; an officer, not a chevalier of the order — chevaliers wear a red ribbon. Look at those horses now;" and Prosper, whistle in hand, would slap the powerful animals on the neck, accompanying the caress with a side glance at Paolo, which meant to say, "Did you ever see horseflesh equal to that?" The *esprit de corps* which prompts us to make much of the banner under which we serve, must be strong indeed, that even this poor, ill-paid, ill-lodged, ill-warmed drudge should put his pride in a concern which made him such a scanty return.

Then followed the days of those beautiful drives in Mr. Prosper's omnibus, and those long sittings in the mild spring sun in the Jardin des Plantes, or in the Tuileries, with Madame Prudence by his side, to give him treats of galette *ad libitum*; then came strolls, gradually lengthening, in the one garden or the other,

where gentle-looking old men and women would stop, gaze at him wistfully, and observe to each other, in passing, "Poor lad, how weak he looks; ah! youth, after all, is no buckler against illness." Perhaps memory brought him back now and then a momentary whiff of the past; the image of a tall, black-haired girl, of a tall, grey-haired gentleman — images faded as the personages of a tale read long ago, and more than half forgotten. But it was so much trouble to think and try to recollect, so as to put in colour into those vague outlines, that he was fain at once to let them slip away. How far easier and more agreeable to watch those beautiful lions crouching down, majestic even in the captivity of their cages; those restless monkeys, for ever playing mischievous tricks to each other, startled into a second's immobility by the bells they had unconsciously set ringing in their gambols; or to gaze on the reflection of the sun playing in the rippling waters of the great basin in the Tuileries, and making them into an endless cascade of sapphires and rubies.

One evening he was on the Terrasse aux Bords de l'Eau, when the setting sun had dyed the noble river below a Tyrian purple. Paolo was looking at this never-tiring spectacle, when his attention was attracted by a small steamer issuing from below the bridge De la Concorde, and in its onward course leaving behind a long white panache of smoke. Paolo watched with unusual eagerness the progress of the little craft, until he saw it stopped and moored in front of the Pont Royal. This sight stirred up a confused recollection of a similar scene, a scene he had witnessed somewhere; was it lately, or long ago? A scene in which the setting sun, a large expanse of water, and a big steamer,

with Thornton on its deck, figured. He hesitated, then said in an excited manner, pointing to the steamer, —

"Thornton is there."

It was the first time, since his illness, that the name and figure of Thornton had risen up clearly in his recollection. That evening Paolo, with the air of one imparting a solemn secret, gave the name of Thornton to Prosper, Benoît, and Mr. Perrin, one after the other. Mr. Perrin asked, —

"Who is Thornton? An Italian?"

"No."

"An Englishman?"

"Yes."

"Is he your father, your brother; in short, any relation to you?"

"Thornton," said Paolo, "is my friend."

"And where is he to be found?" questioned Mr. Perrin.

Paolo tried very hard to recall where, but in vain.

However, the sleeping Psyche was at last awakened, and began to throw light on the past. Thread after thread of memory's involved skein was disentangling itself in Paolo's mind. Within a few days, he recollected every incident up to his arrival in Paris, but from that period down to the present moment, all was indistinct, like objects seen through a mist, pierced, however, by salient points, such as the shouting in the streets of persons in masquerade attire, Miss Jones in a ball dress, a huge building brilliantly lighted, and a violent cold that had made his teeth chatter. It was only by the recital given by those good Samaritans, his hosts, of the circumstances attending his entry under their hospitable roof, that he was able to fill up, by

induction, the gaps in his memory. There was one among these, however, which defied his every effort, and that was the name of the street in which Thornton and he lodged, on their arrival in Paris. He had heard it so seldom, and that too at a time when his mind was beginning to be so strangely confused, that his having altogether forgotten it was nothing extraordinary; and, as for identifying street or house from its appearance, no chance of that, considering that he had never seen either by daylight. Prosper and his wife might have gone on to eternity repeating to him the titles of all the streets they could recollect, without ever hitting on the right one, but that the inventive genius of Benoît devised a method which won the day at last. He bought one of those cheap and popular Paris guides, in which not alone streets, squares, and places, are marked, but wherein you will find the narrowest passage, leading nowhere, accurately noted down. Once in the possession of this, Benoît read over every appellation from beginning to end. This scheme may appear obvious enough, but so was the way to make the egg stand upright, once hit upon by Columbus. As soon as the old bath-man pronounced the word Rohan, Paolo exclaimed that that was the street. Madame Prudence immediately set out with him, but alas! when they reached the spot, the Rue de Rohan no longer existed; all its buildings had been demolished a month previous. Then Paolo became, for the first time, aware that two full months had elapsed since the evening he had left Madame Françoise's house, never again to re-enter it. Yes, he could remember now that it must have been in the last week of March, and now it was the last week of May.

Paolo bore the disappointment with much more equanimity than his companion, who protested that it seemed done on purpose to vex a saint — that it was frightful. Indeed, to be perfectly truthful, we ought to say that Paolo did not look at all disappointed. The revival of his mental faculties had not extended to this sensibility: his affections continued to slumber. He was abundantly indifferent to everything; and the very impressions, which he received from such parts of his recollections, as would have quickened his blood, and set him in a blaze two months ago, were now languid in the extreme — indeed, any thoughts he had about Lavinia or Thornton left his heart undisturbed.

Paolo's recovery of relative health of body and mind coincided, or thereabouts with the 24th of May, a date sacred in the annals of Prosper's family, and to commemorate which the little omnibus superintendent granted himself a holiday — the only one in the year — a holiday of six hours, from midday to six in the evening. On the 24th of May, 1845, Prosper and Prudence had lost their only girl, a child of four years old, and on all successive 24ths of May ever since, they had never failed to go and hang garlands of flowers, and wreaths of immortelles on the small iron cross, which marked the resting-place of little Annette in the cemetery of Mont Parnasse. They resolved on the present anniversary to take Paolo with them, and make a great day of it. Accordingly, husband and wife, dressed in mourning, the children in brown blouses with leather belts, Paolo in his only suit of clothes, marvellously brushed for the occasion, with one of Prosper's caps to replace his lost hat; and last, not least, Benoît, dressed for once like any common mortal, started at noon in

one of the Company's omnibuses, and were duly set down at the Barrière d'Enfer, from whence they proceeded on foot to the cemetery.

At one of the many shops furnishing funereal wares, which swarm in the neighbourhood of all the burying grounds of Paris, Mr. Prosper provided himself with as many wreaths as there were persons in his party, and distributed one to each, the children included; they then proceeded to little Annette's tomb, where each one laid their fragile emblems of a never-dying regret. Prudence threw herself on her knees, an example immediately followed by Prosper, Benoît and Paolo, and calling her boys to her side, bid them kneel also, and joining their hands, made them repeat a short prayer, in which they begged their little sister, now a bright angel in heaven, to intercede for them with the blessed Virgin, so that they might grow up good, and a consolation to their parents, as she herself, the dear lost one, had been. Madame Prudence made no extravagant display of sensibility, but her brown face was rather whiter than usual, and her usual cheerful voice was low and broken. Prosper was very red when he got up, and he was a long time brushing the dust from the knees of his trousers, while Benoît was violently chewing a quid — quite an imaginary one — and looked pugnaciously ready for a thrust at some one, but he checked himself in time.

After this, they walked about the grounds for a couple of hours, comparing notes about this and that gorgeous monument, forming conjectures as to whether the little coffin just brought in was that of a girl or boy, expressing warm sympathy for the tall woman in black, who looked so careworn, and for the elderly

gentleman in the shabby coat, praying so earnestly over a tomb; all this interspersed with remarks innumerable on the pleasantness of the spot. And certainly, if anything can make the abode of death pleasant, these neat, quiet verdant cemeteries of Paris must do so, with their trim alleys and walks, their rows of trees, and fresh groves, their profusion of flowers round the well preserved tombs, their concourse of visitors of all classes, at all times, with all the tokens, in short, of the great care of the living for the dead.

"Three o'clock — *en marche!*" commanded Benoît, after consulting his watch. A last farewell and a last prayer at the foot of little Annette's cross, and they took the road to the barrier, and into the wine shop opposite the omnibus stand, where they had a quiet dinner, composed of *purée aux croutons*, *fricandeau à l'oseille*, omelette, salad — accompanied by a bottle of wine with the yellow seal; which being disposed of, Benoît ordered a fresh bottle, while Prosper carefully undid a paper parcel and placed on the table what at first sight might have been mistaken for a huge nugget of silver. But the children knew what that shining coat meant, and saluted the "*cussy*" with screams of joy, that a lump of real silver would never have excited. The cake being cut in slices, and distributed, and the glasses filled, Benoît rose and gave the health of his young and esteemed friend, Mr. Paulot Maugchinié, which was drunk with hearty good wishes, attested by a merry clinking of the glasses one against the other. Paolo looked more pleased and excited than he had ever done since his recovery, especially when the two minor Prospers went up to him, and putting their arms round his neck, kissed him.

And now, both Benoît's bottle and pipe being empty, and time short, they stepped into a departing omnibus — Benoît on the *impériale* for the enjoyment of a fresh pipe — and twenty minutes later, they alighted at the bureau ruled over by Mr. Prosper, as satisfied, if not more so, with their six hours' holiday, as many bigger and more consequential people with their six weeks' tour on the Continent, or stay at some fashionable town by the sea-side. Fortunately for the poor and busy, who have to work hard for their daily bread, the fewer their occasions for self-indulgence, the greater and keener the enjoyment they derive from them.

CHAPTER III.

The stern Soberer.

MRS. JONES bore better than could have been expected the fatigue of her journey to London, where, however, her stay was but short; for the medical celebrities of the capital, immediately consulted, if differing *toto cælo* in the treatment they recommended, were unanimous in advising country air and tranquillity. Accordingly, aunt and niece, with part of the household, went to Mr. Jones's country seat, near Guildford, within an hour by rail from London.

The change was at first fraught with favourable results. Old sounds, old sights, old associations — all that combination of mysterious agencies and influences, which constitute home, attested their power, and revived the invalid; but the improvement lasted only as long as the novelty of the impressions, and the decline

that followed seemed by contrast more continuous and speedy. Poor Mrs. Jones saw, and felt herself die inch by inch. Stroke followed stroke in quick succession, and the palsy, hitherto confined to the left side, made its way slowly but surely to the right, like an enemy who carries subterranean approaches round a besieged citadel, previous to storming it. The little walk taken morning and evening was reduced to once a day, and had gradually to be curtailed, till it dwindled to nothing. The only way she could now enjoy the air, warmed by the April sun, and the sight and smell of spring flowers, was in a Bath chair; but even this had to be given up in course of time, and an hour or two spent on a sofa, drawn close to a window, became the only solace accessible to the dying woman — a solace which, alas! had to be renounced in its turn, for Mrs. Jones could no longer rise from her bed.

It was at this pass, that all the fond devotedness, which graced Lavinia's heart, revealed itself thoroughly. She lavished treasures of filial tenderness upon her aunt. Ah! if Paolo could have seen her now, looking more like an angel than a woman, as she kept watch over her sinking friend! From the beginning she had unwillingly allowed any one to share with her in the duties of a fond nurse and attendant, yielding only when Nature despotically asserted a claim to repose. But as the dear one's time on earth visibly shortened, love conquered the body's weakness, and day and night there she was by the bedside, day and night devising new schemes to procure more ease for the patient — that relative ease which is but a diminution of pain — there she was insensible to fatigue, inexhaustible in words of encouragement, of hope, of endearment. Was

Lavinia not richly repaid by the calm she imparted, by the smiles she elicited, by the blessings bestowed on her? More than a hundredfold did she receive back in return for her every loving-kindness. She did not, perhaps, recognize at the time the great blessing that fell on herself, while ministering to Mrs. Jones's spiritual comfort; but surely portions of holy writ, the eternal truths of Scripture, recited and thought over by the lamp of a sick room, under the very shadow of death, seldom fail to assume a new and living significance in the mind of the reader, and to mould themselves into practical precepts of life.

At intervals Mrs. Jones referred anxiously to Signor Mancini, wondering why he had not joined them in England. Lavinia, poor girl, needed no reminder about Paolo; a thought of him mingled with her most painful pre-occupations. Gentle and loving as he was, how he would have sympathized with her, had he known of her affliction. Not one of his words, which had ever borne the least reference to her present sad trial, but she recollected as vividly as though spoken only the day before. How truly had he said, that neither youth, nor fortune, nor health, had ever proved an impenetrable shield against the shafts of sorrow, which, through the breast of some dear object, found a sure passage to the most fortunate of mankind. How many times, under how many shapes, had he not tried to impress on her, that affections were the salt of life, the only reality worth pursuing here below.

The truth of his words struck home to her now. But for the love she felt, but for the love she inspired, what would have been in this hour of extremity her poor aunt's fate? The answer was ready: rich in mo-

ney, surrounded by luxury, as she was, Mrs. Jones would have been left, in these her last days, to the mercenary care of hirelings. For, as to Mr. Jones, he had never once omitted going daily to town, had never returned an hour earlier to his dinner, had never shortened by five minutes the time dedicated to his wine, nor once refrained from finishing the day by a comfortable evening's nap in the easy-chair by his wife's bedside. When he spoke, if he spoke at all, it was on topics strangely at variance with the atmosphere of the room; in general, however, he confined himself to a good-night, accompanied by one or other of those would-be consolatory banalities, which, in Mrs. Jones's all but hopeless state, meant less than nothing. The servants on their side made up for the official look of condolence, which they thought becoming to wear in their master's presence, by making twice as merry when out of sight.

As the sufferer's strength decreased, so did the lucidity of her mind increase. One evening, after she had lain in a lethargic state throughout the whole day, Mrs. Jones seemingly awoke, and, calling to Lavinia, bade her come close to her, that she might not lose a word of what she was about to impart. A burden had long pressed heavily on her conscience, said Mrs. Jones — a burden she must throw off, otherwise she could not die easily. Then, with a clearness never once at fault, she went on to make to the astonished girl the following disclosure.

When, now more than thirteen years ago, Mr. Jones had been prevailed on by his wife to adopt and take charge of the only daughter of his eldest brother, Mr. Jones had done so on the express condition, that the existence of the little Lavinia's parents, and the early

circumstances of the family into which she was about to enter, should both be kept a secret from her. Mr. Jones, rich and a man of growing importance, was already ashamed of his former calling, and, wishing to have what he styled a real gentlewoman in his niece, believed he was taking the best means to secure her becoming one, by trampling under foot one of God's commandments. Mrs. Jones, out of fondness for the child on whom she doted, accepted the bargain, and Lavinia accordingly grew up in the belief, confirmed by the silence of her uncle and aunt, that she was an orphan. Her father, on his side, who had renounced all intercourse with his daughter (Mrs. Jones believed for a certain sum of money), kept faithfully out of the way. For the tacit deception she had practised, partly out of fear of her husband's wrath, though still more so out of apprehension as to the consequences, which any divulging of the truth might bring to a niece she adored, repentant Mrs. Jones now humbly asked and easily obtained forgiveness.

It is easy to imagine that Lavinia, not only startled, but deeply affected by this revelation, was anxious to hear something more of her unknown parents. Mrs. Jones had never known Lavinia's mother, who had died shortly after giving over the child to her relations; and of her father she had seen very little. The first time was shortly after her marriage to Mr. Mark Jones; he was then a man perhaps of six or seven and thirty, but looking much older, and very careworn. She knew he had been a bankrupt more than once; but the brothers not being on good terms, she met him but rarely: and from the moment she and her husband had taken charge of Lavinia, all sort of communication had utterly

ceased between her and her brother-in-law; even his abode had been carefully concealed from her. She had, however, discovered, through the loquacity of the servants, that he came by stealth now and then to see her husband. After these visits Mr. Jones had always been out of sorts, complaining of his brother, and calling him a drunkard. As to the poor man's being dead or alive, Mrs. Jones had not the slightest clue to guide her; the last time she had seen him was in the street, just before they went abroad, and he appeared sadly broken down. She would have spoken to him, but for being with her husband. This was all the information Lavinia could gain about her parents.

The aunt completed her confession by making known to her niece her own and her husband's humble origin and beginning in life. She reproached herself the more with having concealed these circumstances, as she now saw that Lavinia might have found, in the knowledge of them, a counterpoise and a corrective to the ideas and aspirations, imbibed from a training far above her station, and fostered by the self-conceit, the preposterous notions, and example of Mr. Jones. His chase after gentility had been the bane of their life. Regarded with feelings of resentment, or ridicule, by the class he had deserted; despised by his superiors, whose notice he courted; haunted by a perpetual fear of meeting some one acquainted with a past he would fain have forgotten himself, Mr. Jones, ever since he had been bitten by the gad-fly of pride, had made himself one of the most disturbed of mortals. Lavinia had surely not forgotten their precipitate and mysterious flight from Florence in the heat of August. Well, that was entirely induced by Mr. Jones having come across

an old patron; in fact, one of his first customers, my Lord Berriton.

As to herself, sighed Mrs. Jones, her health and spirits had declined from the very commencement of this mad straining after an unattainable fashion, from the moment when she had had to resign a wholesome sphere of activity and usefulness for one of inert luxury, in which she felt not only displaced, but every taste, duty, and habit of which jarred with all her former tastes, duties, and habits. Thence it was that she had, somewhat hastily she allowed, encouraged her niece's growing partiality for Signor Paolo; being satisfied by what she had seen of the world, that a union entered upon, even with scanty means, but based on mutual affection and esteem, and some moderation of desires, had more chances of happiness than one of those dashing matches between two spoilt children of fortune, which leaves nothing to wish for but the condiment of love; the couple concerned being too much in love with themselves, to have any left to bestow on each other.

These were the last confidences that Miss Jones received from her aunt. Before another day reached its close, the lips that had made them were sealed for ever here below, and she who had listened to them lay on a sick couch, shattered in body and mind. But the wholesome seed of more than one kind, which had fallen on heart and soul during this painful probation, was not likely to be lost; and we may confidently expect that once the first shock be over, Lavinia will rise from the trial quite a renovated being, strengthened for all good purposes. Sorrow is the *toga virilis* of the soul. He or she, who has never seen face to face that

stern soberer, Death, knows but little of life and its aims.

CHAPTER IV.

Counter-search.

A MIGHTY consultation was being held in the back parlour of Mr. Prosper's establishment, under circumstances promising little for the quick settlement of the point in question, inasmuch as, out of the four plenipotentiaries assembled in conference, two, Benoît and Prosper, were constantly bounding in and out of the room, and thus causing perpetual delay to the proceedings.

If there were ever two galley-slaves by trade, the two were Benoît and Prosper, and if one of the two was a greater galley-slave than the other, that one was Prosper. For people do not douche nor steam themselves for ever; and therefore Benoît might have moments of respite, could even remember having sat down to his dinner, and finished it without interruption; whereas such a luxury was unknown to Prosper. His labours knew of no solution of continuity. People do locomove for ever. There was an uncouth machine stopping before Prosper's dwelling every five minutes, and there was Prosper every five minutes seeing passengers out of it, and passengers into it, comparing notes, settling with the conductor, and whistling to the huge conveyance to move off; more to do yet — back to his bureau to serve out new correspondence tickets, and numbers of precedence, besides affording information to all who ask for it. Five minutes were soon used up at this

rate, and again a warning whistle carried him to the street to begin the foregoing performance anew; and so on and on from seven in the morning to twelve at night. And thus Prosper being whistled away every five minutes, and Benoît telegraphed to from his den in the courtyard, let us say on an average every seven minutes, one or both were always missing, and the deliberation flagged.

The question just now under consideration had been mooted by Paolo, and seconded by Madame Prudence, and was this: Should Paolo go to the police to make inquiries after Thornton? The initiative taken by the young Roman betokened a new phase in his psychological condition. Paolo's feelings were at last roused, and friendship at once asserted its rights. To find his benefactor, to reassure and be reassured, were the paramount desires of his heart. Even had he been without those strong cords of an almost filial affection which bound him to the Englishman, other considerations would have impelled him to the search. With Thornton he should find the means of discharging that part of his debt to his kind hosts which money could repay, and of getting back to Rome. Paolo had left money enough in his lodgings in the Rue de Rohan, to meet both exigencies, and naturally Mortimer would have seen to the safety of his property. Paolo was eager to leave Paris — a sort of nostalgia had seized upon him.

Having decided with himself that the most probable clue to Thornton's whereabouts was to be obtained from the Joneses, he had made up his mind to the effort of calling there. The recollection of Lavinia was linked with many painful, though still confused associations,

so that he knew not whether he should like to see her again or not. He had gone to the Boulevard des Capucines, but only to be thrust into deeper darkness. The Joneses had been gone more than two months, and the tall English gentleman who had been latterly in the habit of calling on them had never shown his face there since their departure. Paolo had then be-thought himself of the police, and some questions having revealed his intention of going to that office, the present consultation had been the result.

Madame Prudence was of opinion that he ought to go, and might do so with safety, provided she were with him. Prosper was for referring the matter to Mr. Perrin, and abiding by the doctor's advice, but was prevented from developing his thesis by the whistle, which summoned him out of doors. Benoît combated any notion of the kind with might and main.

"Go to the police!" remonstrated the ex-sergeant, getting down from the window-sill, in which he had been seated, with a jerk that sent both his slippers across the room in opposite directions. "Throw himself into the wolf's jaws, you mean; and once in, who is to get him out, *quoi?*"

"I have committed no offence," said Paolo, quietly; "why should I be in danger with the police?"

"Let them alone; they'll find plenty of reasons for putting you out of sight. Take it as a rule, a refugee is always giving offence to somebody."

"But I am not a refugee," said Paolo.

"Not a refugee!" repeated Benoît, standing aghast.

"Not a refugee!" repeated Madame Prudence and Prosper, who was making one of his hundreds of entrances.

"No more than you are," persisted Paolo.

"An Italian and not a refugee!" said Benoit, scraping his bald pate; "it's out of nature;" and by way of reconciling himself to the absurdity, he made a thrust or two at the wall. "Are you sure that you are not a ref— D— the boy with his signals. *On y va*. I think all Paris wants to be vapoured to-day — *quoi!*" and away the old fellow shuffled.

"If you are not a refug—" Prosper began, but he had just time to add — "d— the whistle," and he bolted away.

Paolo and Madame Prudence, thus left alone, did what, under the circumstances, was the only reasonable thing to do — namely, put on, he his somewhat greasy casquette, she, her faded bonnet, and went out at once. Prosper, whom they met on the threshold of the office, patiently listening to a complaint lodged by a very fat lady against the conductor, who had not stopped immediately on her signing to him so to do — Prosper, we say, faintly attempted to dissuade his wife from taking a step he was morally sure would be displeasing to his godfather.

Madame Prudence, who harboured some seeds of jealousy as to the great ascendancy exercised by Benoit over her husband, retorted that his godfather was at full liberty to be pleased or displeased, but that she and Signor Paolo were neither of them children, nor yet, thank God, in any need of leading-strings, upon hearing which Prosper wisely let things take their course. Truth to say, the omnibus official's belief in Benoit's infallibility had received a severe check ever since the latter had peremptorily pronounced Paolo's case to be one of cholera, and had been proved to be

grossly in error. And now the morning's discovery that Paolo was not a refugee, when Benoît had declared the impossibility of his being aught else, could not be overlooked by even so dutiful a godson as Prosper. Benoît's prestige was fading away fast, like many another reputation based on infallibility.

Through the same dingy passages and vaults, along the identical mouldy yards and lurid squares, which had frowned a few months ago on Mortimer and Madame Françoise in search of Paolo, now Paolo and Madame Prudence toiled in search of Thornton. The prefecture was to Prudence a *terra incognita*. In fact, she had never been there, and knew no more about the different offices, their names and attributions, than about Troy or Tyre. The best course, in her holy state of ignorance, seemed, and was, to apply to a sergent de ville — there were many about — and ask for direction; but the moment she tried to shape her question, she found it far from easy, considering that in order to ask one's way somewhere, one must know, or thereabouts, the name at least of one's place of destination. Nothing remained in this dilemma, but to put the police agent on the scent of what she wanted, by briefly stating her case, which she did. It was a case for the *Bureau des Renseignements*, said the man, and he forthwith took her to the foot of the staircase, which led to the office of information on the first floor.

A great stillness prevailed in the room, into which, after a discreet knock at the door, and an answer from within to "come in," our visitors ventured with a beating heart. Two gentlemen were busy writing at a desk, and to the one of them who raised his head in mute interrogation, Prudence explained her errand.

"Was she, or was the gentleman in her company, related to the person they inquired for?" asked the official.

"Neither were related to the gentleman they sought after," replied Prudence; "but her companion was a great friend of Mr. Thornton."

"Had they a written order from the prefect of police, authorizing the inquiry?" asked the official again.

They had nothing of the sort. Well, then, let them procure one, and come again with it. It was indispensable.

As our discomfited couple issued on to the little piazza facing the office, they met at the very spot where they had left him, the identical policeman who had directed them, and who now asked of the lady, if she had found her man.

"Alas! not," said Prudence; "we must have an order from the préfet."

"I thought so," said the man, walking along a little way with them. "You needn't apply in person, you know — the préfet wouldn't receive you. Send in your request in writing."

Prudence thanked him for the information. They were standing now in front of the *Bureau des Passeports*.

"Did not you say, that your friend that's missing was an American?" asked the policeman.

"An Englishman," rectified Prudence.

"Ah! yes — a foreigner at all events. Suppose he had set off? Had you not better see at the *Bureau des Passeports*?"

The hint was sensible, and appeared good to follow,

so, with many thanks to the prompter, Paolo and Prudence walked in.

The passport office was to the office of information what a surging sea is to a stagnant pool. In the month of June, Paris, like London, begins to move out of town, and consequently great was the concourse of applicants, and lightning quick went the employés' pens and tongues, taking down descriptions of, and cross-examining, we were going to say, the accused; for there is something suggestive of a criminal court, and a witness-box, in the calling up of persons, and then subjecting them to interrogations, the answers to which are written down. As the half-bewildered Prudence, with a rueful face, was contemplating a gap in the thick human wall standing between her and the official's desk, the municipal guard on duty stationed in front of the rails, noticing her distress, bade her come forward, and, gallantly making way for her, observed to a tall by-stander, who grumbled about being beforehand, that the fair sex always took precedence in France. Thanks to this seasonable succour, she was enabled to make known her request to the nearest employé, who directed her to another part of the room, where there were more desks and more men at them.

The one to whom she addressed herself proved of a very humane disposition, and showed an interest in her and her companion. Maybe he had a mother or sister, not better off in the world than poor scantily dressed Prudence, or perhaps he had once had a brother looking as emaciated and careworn as Paolo. Sympathy, however, is to be gratefully accepted without prying into its origin, and gratefully it was received in this case, when the kindly disposed individual,

depositing his pen behind his ear, took himself out of the room with a scrap of writing containing the name and last address of the person inquired after, and presently came with the little consoling intelligence, that "Sir" Mortimer Thornton had had his passport *viséd* for the United States on the 16th of May.

"He is gone to look after me, I am sure," said Paolo, as he walked away slowly and with tears starting into his eyes.

"Well, when he does not find you there, he'll come back, and seek you out here," replied Prudence with a show of confidence and cheerfulness which did not go farther than the surface. They reached home before Prosper's state of distraction had entirely disorganized the service of his line of omnibuses; for the little man had been so frightened out of his wits by the visions of dungeons, bagnios, and scaffolds, which friendly Benoit had evoked for his comfort, that for the last quarter of an hour he had been sending the passengers for the Jardin des Plantes to the Pantheon, and *vice versa*, heaping blunder upon blunder.

Prudence slept little that night, and thought much, and the upshot of her reflections was, that it would be worth while to apply to the English Embassy; "for," reasoned Prudence, "Mr Forton" (such being her pronunciation of Thornton's name), "Mr. Forton has been gone now, if he went at all, for nine-and-twenty whole days, and even I know that nine-and-twenty days is time enough for going, staying, and returning from New York. He may then be back already, and if he is, ten to one but they know it at his embassy."

Madame Prudence told this to Paolo next day, as the fruits of a counsel held with her pillow, and, un-

like most counsels, it was favourably received by all, and eagerly grasped at by the young man; and with renewed hope Prosper's wife and her *protégé* started on this new expedition after Thornton.

As directed by the concierge of the British Embassy, they turned into the consulate office, where the simple statement of their wish to know whether an English gentleman of the name of Thornton was actually in Paris, drew forth a volley of questions as to who they themselves were — if they had any pecuniary claim against this Englishman, or were related to him — and what had put it into their heads to come to the English consulate. These queries answered, and the nature of the interest prompting the inquiry clearly and fully explained, then, and not till then, the secretary or clerk, by whom they were received, informed them that Mr. Mortimer Thornton had solicitors in London, whose address he would write down for them, if they wished it. Meagre as was the proffered service, it was accepted with thanks, and Mr. Secretary accordingly presented them with a bit of paper, on which was written, "Messrs. Henstrid and Co., 14, Golden Square, London," whereupon the two applicants walked out very little wiser than they had walked in — Prudence, with feminine perspicuity, suspecting the consul's clerk of knowing more about Thornton than he chose to say, a suspicion which, however, with feminine kindness, she forbore to impart to poor Paolo.

Paolo despatched without delay a letter to Messrs. Henstrid and Co. in London, and one to Mortimer Thornton, addressed to Via Babuino, in case his friend should have returned to Rome. He also wrote a few lines to Angelo Gigli — that being the real name of

our funny little friend, Salvator Rosa — to recollect which cost Paolo not a little thinking. This last epistle, sibylline enough, simply stated that Thornton had disappeared, but without the least reference to any of the attendant circumstances, asking, should any clue to him happen to reach Salvator, that the intelligence might be immediately sent to the writer in Paris, care of Mr. Prosper, Quai Montebello, 77.

To his illness or to his money difficulties, Paolo made no allusion whatever. Why should he give the good little painter the pain of knowing his friend to be in distress, when he had no power to help? For well did Paolo know that not all the money Salvator and his other companions could scrape together, would be half sufficient to take him from Paris to Rome.

We may as well mark here that Paolo, on quitting Rome, had, in the anticipation of a long absence, taken with him all the money he possessed in the world, and that the French bank post bill representing this sum, had been left with Thornton; also that the half-dozen pieces of gold he had had about him when he set off on the unlucky expedition to the Hôtel de Ville, had also gone, purse and all, comprising the scrap of paper with the address of the Rue de Rohan, probably dropped while he was either scuffling with or trying to bribe the guards to let him in as one of the ball guests.

In due course of post Messrs. Henstrid and Co., with business-like alacrity, acknowledged Paolo's letter: they regretted not being able for the present to furnish Mr. Mancini with the address of their esteemed client, M. Thornton, Esq., whose absence abroad they had every reason to suppose would last a considerable time.

This letter, however unsatisfactory, had in it a drop

of consolation for Paolo. It assured him that, wherever Thornton might be, he was safe and uninjured.

Messrs. Henstrid's letter was quickly followed by one from Salvator, to say that Thornton had not been seen in Rome since he had left the city with Paolo. Salvator's letter, naturally enough, teemed with questions and conjectures about the mystery of Thornton's disappearance, and asked to be told what were Paolo's plans for the future. Paolo wrote back that he had no other plan than to be back in Rome as soon as possible, and would delay all explanations about Thornton and himself until he could give them *vivá voce*. Paolo had two motives for this postponement of confidence — one, his unwillingness to make known his present embarrassments to his friend, which he could not avoid if he entered into any details of what had occurred; the other, his repugnance to accuse Lavinia, which it would be difficult not to do, if a real statement of the case was to be given.

CHAPTER V.

Himself again.

MESSRS. HENSTRID AND Co.'s concise and well-written letter had extinguished Paolo's last hope of reaching Thornton for the present, even through the medium of the post, but had in no way diminished the young man's confidence, that wherever that good friend was, he was in search of him. In the meantime he must depend on himself, that is, he must work not only for his daily bread, but to gain wherewithal to make his way back to Rome.

Paolo did not disguise from himself that it was easier to wish for work than to procure it; more peculiarly so for one in his own situation — a stranger in a foreign land, imperfectly acquainted with French, with no possession but a threadbare suit, a solitary change of linen, and the good-will of three kind-hearted creatures, poor as rats, and without a right to claim kindred with any other human beings. But when necessity gives us a gripe of her iron claw, it is said that she communicates to us invention. Paolo consulted his confidant, Prudence, or rather reposed his confidence in her motherly heart. A good woman, whatever her station, is the earthly providence of the men about her. Prudence shrank a little from the idea of the delicate-looking invalid working for his daily bread; he must get stronger first, indeed he must.

"I am strong enough," said Paolo, "and I cannot afford to go on idling. I have been already too long a burden to you — I hate to think how long; but I have not been myself till to-day."

Prudence scorned the notion of his having been a burden to them. The little they had been able to do was more than repaid by his having put up so willingly with their poor accommodation, so far below his station and habits.

"Pray," said Paolo, trying to smile, "don't seek to diminish the benefits you have conferred, by fancying me some prince in disguise. I wish I may never have worse accommodation than what you are pleased to disparage. I have not been brought up in lavender, I assure you. At seventeen I was left naked as a worm, with no other capital than my two hands. Had I

twenty lives to spend in your service, I should still never be quits with you — never."

If it be true, as it certainly is, that we must do good for its own sake, and not for any thanks it may bring us, it is not the less true, that a warm acknowledgment of what we meant as kindness, is, next to the testimony of our own conscience, the very sweetest reward we can receive. The grateful enthusiasm of the young Roman went to her heart the more, that Prudence was less accustomed to anything like demonstrativeness on his part. Only now had his benumbed feelings suddenly awoke to life, showing him, in their full extent, the obligations he was under to his kind hosts. Paolo had spoken the literal truth when he had said, that till this day he had not been himself.

"Well, then," said Prudence, briskly, "we'll do our best to find you work; and — *à la garde de Dieu* — is there any one thing you can do better than another?"

"I can draw and I can paint," returned Paolo. "I was brought up as a painter."

"Painting and drawing are rather out of my way," and the Frenchwoman, with her forefinger on her lips, fell to musing. "Playing on the piano and singing would have been better; there's the daughter of the porter next door, she wants a singing-master, I know."

"I can teach Italian, or copy papers," said Paolo. "I don't care what it is; I am ready to be a street porter and carry loads, if I can get nothing else to do."

"We shan't come to that, I hope," said Prudence; "but you must give me time to think."

Prosper, when he was apprised of Paolo's wants

and wishes, racked his brain, but found nothing there except omnibuses, and what belonged to omnibuses; and he was keen for applying to his company for a vacant place of conductor for his *protégé*. Benoît got frightfully excited at the thought that here was Signor Paolo, actually a painter, and a painter in want of work, and not a fortnight ago all the baths of his establishment had received a fresh coat of green. More practical Prudence passed all her neighbours in a mental muster; the review did not take long, and the result was, that "if Mr. Perrin did not help him out of this trouble, why he'd have to stick in it."

Mr. Perrin accordingly received a visit from Madame Prudence, and the dilemma was made known to him with a circumlocution and diplomacy, that would have been creditable in quarters to which Prudence and Co. looked up with the awe due to principalities and arch-angels. Mr. Perrin, having, with glasses on his nose, succeeded in penetrating into the subject on which he was being consulted, now took off his spectacles, twirling them between his thumb and first finger — the ordinary sign with him of contention of mind.

"He is a painter, is he? a noble calling, no doubt; but for practical purposes I had rather he had been a musician. But all these Italians can sing and play, can't they?"

"Just what I said to him," sighed Prudence; "but it's just another of his misfortunes that he can't do either the one or the other; and I see no help for it."

"None, indeed, that way," said the doctor; "we must think of something else — we must think; when I have thought, I'll call and tell you. Adieu."

By the time Prudence got home, a placard, written

in Prosper's best hand, was already on the window shutters of the office, announcing to all passers-by, that drawing lessons by a first-rate master were to be had on moderate terms; for the terms and address to apply within. From that day, Mr. Prosper, whenever his avocations called him momentarily out of his premises, and that was pretty often, we know, never failed, before recrossing the threshold, to stop and read his own placard with the utmost attention, giving himself all the while, to the best of his ability, the air of an amateur meditating upon the benefit to be derived from the union of a first-rate and cheap master.

Poor Prosper! his kindly artifice had no effect. Luckily, however, after two days of heart-sickness, Mr. Perrin appeared in the waiting-room of the establishment, his spectacles particularly bright and clear; he came to leave the address of a gentleman, on whom he requested Mr. Paolo Mancini to call next day at eleven in the morning. The gentleman in question was a savant of much renown, named Pertuis, one who had brought to bear upon Rome and the Romans of yore a prodigious amount of knowledge and of critical acumen, and the patience of a Benedictine monk. In all likelihood, Mr. Pertuis knew more about both subjects than most of their own contemporaries.

Mr. Pertuis occupied an old and rather quaint-looking house in the Place Royale, a quiet nook in busy, worldly Paris; and Paolo, while traversing a suite of lofty rooms on his way to the study of the man of learning, had his eyes and heart truly gladdened by the sight of many a dear, and once to him familiar, object. On the walls were finely engraved views of Rome; some good copies from Raphael — on pedestals,

casts from *chef d'œuvres* of sculpture. Paolo found Mr. Pertuis busy comparing different authors, with a view to establishing a contested date, and the wide writing-table before him having proved incapable of accommodating the number of open volumes of all sizes, to which he wanted to refer, the savant had ranged on either side of the arm-chair he occupied two lesser tables, also overloaded with books. It was in this state of circumvallation that Mr. Pertuis was surprised by Paolo, who, according to orders, had been ushered in without any previous announcement. The archaeologist, therefore, in order to get out of his entrenchment without endangering the equilibrium of his tables, and the rank and file of his books, a work of trouble and time, had no other alternative but to push his chair backwards out of risk of upsetting his allies, and to meet his visitor by a flank movement, which he dexterously accomplished, laughing heartily, and apologizing at the same time.

This trifling incident saved Paolo much of the awkwardness that invariably attends a first visit, particularly when the visitor is very shy, and comes to ask a favour. Mr. Pertuis's cordial reception and amenity of manners, without mentioning his fluent Italian, soon put Paolo at his ease. Rome and Art were the exclusive topics of the conversation, and Paolo spoke of both like the warm-hearted patriot and devoted artist he was. If Mr. Pertuis, as was more than probable, aimed at drawing out his companion, his wish must have been fully gratified. After the lapse of a good half-hour, Paolo felt it incumbent on him to rise; shaking hands, Mr. Pertuis begged the favour of another call in a few days, when he hoped to have found some opening for him.

This was all the allusion made to the circumstances, which had been the motive of the young man's introduction to the savant.

After a week, Paolo considered he might venture again to seek an interview with his patron of the Place Royale. Mr. Pertuis received him cordially, and handed to him the address of a Mr. Boniface.

"An excellent friend of mine," added Mr. Pertuis; "and an astronomer of much repute. I fear the occupation he may have to offer you may not be very acceptable, as it has nothing whatever in common with your profession. Nevertheless, I would not advise you to refuse it, for you remember the old saying — a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

Paolo eagerly assented, and lost no time in seeking out Mr. Boniface. This gentleman was a retired employé of the observatory, who, by dint of having been perpetually on the look-out for new planets, and new or old comets, had nearly lost his eyesight. He was now using his forced leisure in arranging his former notes and observations, and preparing them for publication; but, as he was unable either to read or write for any length of time at a stretch, he wanted a secretary who could do both for him, and had for some time been in quest of one, without ever having been able to decide on any of those who had offered to take the situation. For Mr. Boniface, simple and naïf as a child in all other respects, in what concerned his MS., distrusted the entire bulk of mankind, being convinced there was a general permanent conspiracy on foot to rob him of his theory on the formation of comets, and of the glory that must accrue from it. A foreigner and a stranger to science, such as Mr. Pertuis had

guaranteed the person he recommended to be, was, under the circumstances, a godsend to the old astronomer.

"Sir," began Mr. Boniface, a tall bony man past sixty, rather bent, and with a green silk shade over his eyes — "sir, I must warn you at once that I am very fidgety in my ways."

Paolo thought it polite to make a deprecatory gesture.

"Indeed, I am," continued Mr. Boniface; "my sister here present will tell you that I am so, and not easily to be satisfied — and — an early riser to boot. Marie, my dear, if I forget anything else I ought to say, be so good as to remind me. Well, then, if what I have confessed does not serve to deter you, sir, well, then, I shall be glad if you agree to come, and we will begin work to-morrow." Here Mr. Boniface stopped and gazed vacantly at the space before him.

"About the hours," whispered sister Marie, into his ear.

"Ah, yes — about the hours," resumed Mr. Boniface; "thank you, Marie, my dear. I had forgotten about the hours. If you can be here by eight in the morning, sir, at eight precisely, you will oblige me greatly."

Paolo bowed assent.

"Very well, at eight in the morning; then it's all settled;" and all being settled, Mr. Boniface gave a nod, and relapsed into what seemed a trance.

"My brother's hours," said Mdlle. Marie, now taking the conversation into her own hands, "are from eight in the morning to mid-day, and again from one o'clock to six in the evening. Will they suit you?"

"Perfectly, madam," said Paolo.

"Now for the terms," cried the sister again, into her brother's ears.

"Ah, yes — for the terms," repeated Mr. Boniface, awakening; "very kind of you to remind me of the terms — I had forgotten all about them. Well, then, we say from eight in the morning till noon; will that do?"

"It is not that," interrupted the sister, "it is not that."

"How not that?" said the brother; "I am sure I thought it was from eight till twelve."

"Bless me — yes, brother; but we are speaking about money now, not hours. Shall I arrange it for you, my dear?"

"Precisely, precisely," reiterated Mr. Boniface, suddenly relieved.

"My brother, sir," said Mdlle. Marie, turning to Paolo, "offers four francs a day, or, to be more exact, sixty francs a fortnight, always payable in advance; each party remaining free at the expiration of the fifteen days to break or renew the agreement. This clause," added the lady, remarking the disagreeable effect it had upon the young man, "means nothing further than that my brother is, or fancies himself, over particular, and consequently is unwilling to bind you for a longer period than a fortnight to duties which might prove unpalatable to you."

Paolo stammered forth a few words, expressive of confidence in his employer's indulgence, said that he hoped to make up by zeal for his want of knowledge, and withdrew, not at all enlightened, and considerably alarmed as to the nature of the employment he had un-

dertaken; which, however, proved on the morrow, as far as one day's experience might be trusted, far less trying than he had anticipated. His hours were thus divided: from eight o'clock to twelve, he had to put in chronological order a good many notes, and then reading them aloud, to retrench or add to them under Mr. Boniface's direction and dictation; from one to six in the evening, to make a fair copy of the morning's work.

As a neighbouring clock struck six, Mdlle. Boniface appeared to announce to her brother that dinner was on the table, and to Paolo that his task for the day was over. Paolo took his leave, and was already in the passage, when he was overtaken by Mademoiselle, who put a small packet in his hand, explaining that it was the fortnight's salary, as stipulated. The young man reddened, as if he had been caught in the act of stealing the famous theory, and hurried away without a word of thanks.

The first thing he did, even before allowing himself the meal, of which he stood in great need, was to go and hire a furnished room in the garret of a house in the Rue du Four, a street close to Rue Cassette, where Mr. Boniface lived; the second, to buy some toys for the children, and then for himself a hat, to replace Prosper's old greasy cap. This done, he entered a third or fourth rate restaurant, and indulged in what had become a luxury to him, viz. a *bouillon*, a beefsteak *aux pommes-de-terre*, and bread *à discrétion* — all enjoyed for the modest sum of fifteen sous, one sou for the waiter included.

Great was the impatience with which Mr. Prosper's household waited to know how Mr. Paolo had passed his day, and great was the excitement produced by his

account, and the presentation of the sword and gun for the little ones; but there was almost a tumult when he announced that he had taken a lodging, and meant to go and sleep there that night. Benoît especially was so overcome by his feelings, and by something else to boot, that in an attempt to vent them on the wall, he lost his balance, and would have fallen flat on the ground, but for the "boy's" catching him in his arms — an embrace from which Paolo could not extricate himself short of many solemn vows never to forget his "vieux."

By ten o'clock that night Paolo was established in his attic, busy with his accounts. Eight francs paid in advance for a fortnight's rent of his room, five francs for his hat, fifteen sous for the toys, ditto for his dinner, made up a sum of fourteen francs fifty centimes, an enormous amount for one day, which, deducted from the sixty he had received, left a balance of five-and-forty francs, and fifty centimes. Paolo reckoned that, by exercising the strictest economy, with the proviso that Mr. Boniface continued satisfied with him, he might be able to realize within two months wherewithal to defray his journey back to Rome. Two months seemed long in prospect, but they would pass as so many others had passed, and with this consolatory reflection he jumped into his bed, which gave a succession of cracks, like the bursting of a rocket. A rap on the thin partition wall immediately followed. Paolo rapped back, and a voice so near that it seemed to be in the room, said, —

"Bonne nuit, voisin."

"Bonne nuit, voisin," returned Paolo; and then all relapsed into silence.

"A neighbour of a kind disposition," thought Paolo. "I'd bet any wager that he is just such another poor

devil as I am. Poverty is a good conductor of kindness. Were this a palace, and my neighbour and I millionnaires — save us, ye gods — what introductions, and notes, and cards it would need to bring us together.”

Paolo could think no further, for he fell asleep. We will leave him in this satisfactory condition, and take a trip across the Channel to see after the fortunes of one, whose claims on our sympathy are scarcely, if at all, inferior to those of our Morpheus-stricken friend.

CHAPTER VI.

The Alternative.

NOTHING could prevail on Miss Lavinia to leave the house in which her aunt had died. The very reasons urged by Mr. Jones against her remaining there, its sad associations and utter solitude, for the surrounding villas were emptying apace for the London season, only served to endear Holly Lodge to her. What Lavinia wished above all things, was to be let alone. Hers was not one of those griefs, which seek to be diverted, or evaporate in visits of condolence and idle demonstrations. Mr. Jones did not insist. There was that about Lavinia — a something new and imposing, the majesty of sorrow — which enforced acquiescence. In all the bloom of health and spirits, in all the splendour of her gay attire of yore, she had never impressed him as being half so commanding and queen-like, as she did now in her plain mourning dress, with her pale face and dejected looks.

Nor was she sorry to be separated from Mr. Jones

at this period. Her uncle had gained nothing in her eyes of late. The deceit he had practised on her, and imposed on his wife, the perfect indifference and unfeelingness he had displayed throughout the whole of Mrs. Jones's illness, were little calculated to increase the esteem or affection of his niece for him. Nor had she forgotten a confidence made to her in a moment of anguish, at Rome, viz. that Mrs. Jones had married without a settlement, and that consequently all she possessed had become Mr. Jones's property. Arguing upon the strength of her recent impressions, Lavinia came to the conclusion that Mr. Jones's sole aim in marrying the widow Jarman, had been to get hold of her money, and that he had done so by taking advantage of her simplicity and good faith. The prospect, therefore, of residing with, and indeed of being entirely dependent on, a man so unscrupulous and selfish, alarmed her moral sense and revolted her honest pride. Had she but been wiser, she would not have lacked a firm friend and protector in this crisis. Much did she now dwell on Paolo and on his love for her, and oh! how she wished from the depths of her soul that she could recall the past. Vain longings! vainer regrets! she had wilfully thrown away, past hope of recovery, that which would have been a strong stay alike in happiness or sorrow. She was alone in the world — no, not alone — she had a father.

And then she resolved on having an explanation with her uncle about this unknown father of hers, and anxiously waited for an opportunity. This, however, did not occur for some little time. Mr. Jones wrote frequently to her would-be kind and consolatory notes, asking after her health, and whether she wanted for

anything, but he stayed away a whole fortnight. When he at last made his appearance, it so happened that Lavinia was too unwell to venture upon a topic so trying to her feelings, and she was fain to put off her inquiries until a more favourable moment.

The next Sunday morning brought Mr. Jones again to the Lodge, and this time Lavinia at once told him she was glad to see him, as she wanted to know all that he could tell her of her father. Mr. Jones grew black in the face, which was his way of blushing, and with an oath, —

“So the old woman peached, did she; never mind, it is all the better that she broke the ice for me. I had made up my mind to tell you all, but you must curb your impatience. You will require, I know, tangible proofs of what I have to say, and you shall have them on my next visit.”

Not another syllable on this subject could Lavinia draw from him.

The day of the longed-for explanation at length arrived; it was on the Sunday following that on which Lavinia had asked for it. Mr. Jones's statement was full, minute, consistent in all its parts, leaving nothing to desire in point of clearness of evidence. We give its substance in as few words as possible, though with some touches, which Mr. Jones's modesty suppressed about himself.

Mr. Mark Jones had, as we already know, a brother older than himself by some years, who went to seek his fortune in London, and had been established there for some time as a wine merchant, when the younger brother set out for the capital, bent on a similar errand. Nay, it even clearly resulted from some

of our Mr. Jones's reluctantly made admissions, that this elder brother had been of some use to the younger, on his *début* in the vast theatre of the metropolis. However this may be, it came to pass that in proportion to the rise of the younger's fortunes, was the decline of those of the elder, owing to his addictedness to drink. The issue was bankruptcy, and the bankrupt drank the harder to console himself, and became what all drunkards become, a pest to society.

The younger brother, who had just married the widow Jarman, felt the presence of this near relative to be a disgrace, and fearing that the discredit it reflected on himself might injure the profitable and genteel business he was now carrying on, agreed to secure a small annuity to the ex-wine-merchant, on condition that he should quit the fashionable West End, and banish himself to one of the most distant and obscure suburbs. The bargain was at once accepted, and the bankrupt retired to Whitechapel, where he found some one willing to help him to bear his troubles. So he married and had a daughter, who received the high-sounding name of Lavinia. Though forbidden any, whatever intercourse with his lucky relative of the West End, the exile of Whitechapel repeatedly applied, both in writing and in person, to Mr. Mark Jones for an increase of his annuity, which he alleged to be scarcely enough for one, and starvation for two. Mr. Mark said he should have thought of that before he took a wife, and obstinately resisted all importunities until this child was born; when, more out of fear of further disgrace from an exposure of family circumstances than from compassion, he consented to a small augmentation of the allowance.

After this, the written demands and personal requests for money grew rarer, but did not wholly cease for all that, and it was upon the occasion of one of these interested visits, that Mrs. Jones first noticed and was captivated by the little Lavinia, who had accompanied her father. Lavinia was then seven years old, and a miracle of beauty, gentleness, and intelligence. Even matter-of-fact Mr. Jones was not insensible to her infantine grace, and precocious witty sayings; so no wonder Mrs. Jones, to whom Providence had denied the boon of children, should have earnestly desired to adopt and bring her up as her own child. It is not to be supposed that Mr. Jones yielded at first, or with a good grace, to his wife's wishes, but he did so at last; and after much mean haggling, that bargain was entered into between the two brothers, the clauses of which have been already hinted at by dying Mrs. Jones. When Lavinia was made over by her willing parents to their rich relations, she was immediately consigned to a first-rate boarding-school to receive a brilliant education. Together with this act of adoption, Mr. Jones took another important step; he parted with the Italian warehouse. He had capital enough to insure his being a man of some importance anywhere, and self-conceit enough to match his capital.

A couple of years after Mr. Jones's name as a tradesman had been erased from the *General Directory*, he received by post a note, entreating his attendance without delay at the residence of a Mary Holywell, who had important revelations to make with respect to Miss Lavinia Jones, without doing which, she did not dare to face death. The appeal, earnestly worded enough, might, as the experienced Mr. Jones was

aware, be a snare to draw him into an ambush, from whence no escape without undrawing his purse; it might even be one of his worthy brother's stratagems to force from him a few more pounds; and Mr. Jones had fifty minds to throw note and request to the winds. But there is fascination in a mystery, and so after wasting some hours in wise pros and cons, Mr. Jones ended by proceeding to the address given by the *soi-disant* Mary Holywell.

It was one of those haunts of vice and misery, which a beast of the field would not have chosen for its lair; one of the foul excrescences, not unfrequently met with on the smooth stuccoed surface of the proud, rich, and prudish metropolis of Great Britain. At the house, to which he had been directed, Mr. Jones found a woman, evidently in the last stage of consumption, on whose death-stricken face still lingered the traces of great past beauty, and who in a husky voice painfully gasped out the following strange tale.

She had known the elder Mr. Jones and his wife well, having occupied for years a house in common with them in Whitechapel. She herself had at that time been living with a man, a Spitalfields weaver, who was not her husband, and she and her fellow-lodger Mrs. Jones, had been confined within a week or two of one another, and admiring the name given to the Jones's baby, she had called hers also Lavinia. Lavinia Jones, always a puny, sickly child, died before it was quite a twelvemonth old, a great distress to the father, who became alarmed that the increase of allowance, made on account of his child, would be withdrawn by his brother, as soon as he knew of the poor little creature's death. Under this pressure, Jones proposed

to her to let the deceased child pass for hers, and to give him up her living infant, for the consideration of a weekly allowance. She was sickly, pleaded Mary Holywell, unable to work, and otherwise utterly destitute. The man she lived with had left her and gone to California. God forgive her, but she was sorely tried, and yielded to Jones's tempting tongue. She did not feel much what she had done, as long as her girl lived with her fellow-lodgers, but her heart had begun to trouble her, when Mr. Mark Jones took the child, believing it to be his own blood, and now she couldn't die with the lie on her conscience.

Well, we have not recorded much good of Mark Jones: he was compassionate in this instance, he sent a medical man to attend on Mary Holywell; but the poor troubled spirit, relieved from its burden of a bad secret, passed away on the very following day.

Mr. Jones was a man of business habits, therefore he went at once to the registrar's office for the parish of Whitechapel, to seek confirmation of the allegations made by Mary Holywell. There he found, and had copies taken of the certificates, which he now laid before his present wretched listener, — one of Lavinia Jones's death, and one of Lavinia Holywell's birth. His next act was to go to his brother's, with the two damning documents in his hand, and there he swore a frightful oath, that if the guilty wretch ever breathed a syllable of this foul transaction, or even showed his face again in his (Mark Jones's) neighbourhood, he would try what punishment the law awarded for such knavery. This done, he debated with himself what his own course should be, and he came to the conclusion — half from liking to the child, half from dread of the

scandal which might arise — that the wisest thing to do was to hold his tongue, and keep his knowledge to himself, even to the exclusion of his wife; and this determination he had steadily adhered to, up to this moment of revelation to Lavinia herself.

A thunderbolt does not carry stronger conviction of its reality to the senses of the terror-stricken wayfarer, at whose feet it falls, than did the truthfulness and authenticity of Mr. Jones's statement to the almost stunned mind of Lavinia. She took in, nevertheless, at one glance and for ever, its whole purport, and was spared at least the struggles of suspense. All failed her at once — the past, the present, the future, even her own identity. The very affection, which from the other side of the grave cast a ray of light into the *camera obscura* of her life, was no longer hers — she had no right to it. Her inner as well as her outer world reeled and crumbled about her. Despair clutched the poor girl's heart, and hiding her face with her hands, she burst into a passion of tears.

Mr. Jones tried to console her in his way. There was no occasion for her to put herself in such a state; it was mere folly; for what, after all, was there changed in her situation? — nothing but a name. Had he not known of her real condition for these eleven years past, and yet had he not gone on with her education, just as if she had been his real niece; made her the thorough lady she was, and which she might remain to the end of her days, if she only trusted to him? His house was hers as before, his fortune at her disposal, as it had been, and so on. Lavinia sobbed out her thanks as best she could, but said, the shock had been too sudden, had taken her so unawares, that

she must have time and quiet to think, and to regain composure. Certainly, poor thing, agreed Mr. Jones. He showed himself, under the circumstances, both discreet and attentive. He called to see her the next day, and the next, but only stayed a few minutes, as he explained, to satisfy himself that she was not ill, and wanted for nothing. By and by, he relapsed into his usual Sunday visit.

Thus two months passed by — two months full for Lavinia of anxious consultations with herself. One point was perfectly clear to her perception. She could not go on with any propriety living under the same roof with, and eating the bread of one to whom she was no kin, who had been, in fact, by a fraud, forced, as it were, to become her benefactor. Independently of her innate self-respect, which forbade such a course, she would, so she felt, at least, by continuing to occupy a place which was not hers by right, be a party, passive indeed, but still a party, to a deceit upon the world. But where was she to go? how was she to support herself? She had none from whom to ask advice and guidance; because to none had she the courage to reveal the shame of her birth. None but Mr. Jones. Why then not trust him? He had correspondents, connections, interests in every quarter of the globe; of all people he was the best able to help her, and having the power, why should she doubt his good will? He had shown himself to her a real friend. Thus arguing with herself, she came to the conclusion that she would make him the confidant of her wish to find some situation — abroad.

Mr. Jones's conduct well justified his claim to the title of friend, that she had bestowed on him. She had

surely misjudged the man. He was unobtrusively attentive, kind, at times almost tenderly so. He brought her newspapers, books, and the choicest flowers; he never interfered with her wishes by word or deed, even seemed quite reconciled to her plan of seclusion. He availed himself of every opportunity to encourage and reassure her as to her future. He had even repeatedly hinted at a something in store for her — a something that might greatly surprise, but he fondly hoped would not be displeasing to her. She knew not what to make of this innuendo, unless it was an allusion to some offer of marriage he had received for her. If so, the moment, in her opinion, was ill chosen, but it would be a reason the more why she should let him know her intentions.

One afternoon, before dinner, she summoned all her courage, and told him she wished to speak to him about herself. He did not look at all disturbed — of the two, rather pleased. He said that, though he was not her uncle, that did not militate against his being her friend — a tenderer friend than perhaps she surmised, and as he spoke, he took one of her hands in his.

“I am sure you are my friend,” replied Lavinia, “and indeed I am grateful to you for your kindness; at the same time you must acknowledge, that your being only my friend, and unfortunately not my uncle, must prevent my remaining with you on the same footing as if I were in reality your niece.”

“Well, I allow it,” replied Mr. Jones, and added quickly, in a would-be passionate tone, “why may I not become to you something better than uncle or friend?”

She did not seize his meaning.

"Is there not a more sacred and dearer title that you can bestow on me?" asked he, in a still tenderer tone; "a title which will confer on me the right to protect you in the face of the whole world?"

She looked alarmed and perplexed, like one who cannot take in the sense of earnest words, spoken in an unknown language.

"I am healthy, and strong," went on the tempter, "and many a younger lady than you are, has married an older man than I am, and not rued the bargain; quite the contrary. What do you say to it, eh?"

She remained as if made of stone for a while; then violently disengaging her hand, and recoiling from his effort to repossess himself of it as from the touch of a serpent, she sprang to the other end of the room, saying, —

"Oh! never — never — rather die!"

Mr. Jones turned the colour of lead, and strode towards her with a menacing air — all the worst passions which degrade man's nature flushed from his eyes.

"Don't rouse the devil in me," he shouted, "or by ——"

He made an effort to control himself, retreated a step or two, and burst into a coarse laugh.

"I am a precious donkey to take your big words seriously; you'll not find it easy to bully me, I warn you. I mean to have you for my wife, and, will you, nill you, my wife you shall be. I give you a night and a day for meditation on the difference between abandonment, beggary, starvation, and every luxury of life, a jolly husband, and lots 'of friends. You'll say

'yes' to me with a good grace, I dare say." And he left her.

Lavinia locked herself into her room, watching with a throbbing heart for the sound of wheels, to let her know that he was gone. Sooner than she had hoped, she heard his gig drive away. Then she threw herself on her knees, and first prayed long and fervently, then putting a few articles of clothing into a small carpet-bag, she glided out of the house, and walked as fast as she could to the nearest railway station. Within another hour she was at the London terminus. There she took a cab, telling the coachman to drive to Camden Town. The name had slipped involuntarily from her lips, in the effort to remember some out-of-the-way place. She had never been in Camden Town, did not know whether it was a single street, or a suburb consisting of many streets.

The coachman asked whereabouts he was to stop in Camden Town; "it were a loose sort of direction."

"I will pull the check-string," said the perplexed girl.

She was made aware of having reached her destination by the obstinate turning of the cabman to peep in at her. She stopped him at once, paid him his demand, took her carpet-bag, and walked straight on, not quite sure whether she was awake or in a dream. The cabman stared after her, shook his head, then set his horse again in motion, satisfied that it was no business of his to care what became of his out-of-the-way passengers.

Lavinia's legs tottered under her, as she looked to the right and the left, trying for the courage to knock at one of the many houses, in the windows of which

were notices of apartments to let. No bench near for the tired, yet rest she must; she was ready to drop on the pavement — still wandering on, wandering on. She was now in a row of two-storeyed, neat little houses; looking over the railing, she could see the four walls of the front parlours; anything so diminutive must be cheap. She knocked at one of these small dwellings, and said she wanted a room. It was the landlady herself who opened the door; after a close and suspicious inspection of the inquirer, she answered that she never let rooms to single ladies. A second application farther down the row met the same fate. The third time she was permitted to see a room, but when, in reply to the query of what luggage she had, she allowed that she had nothing but the carpet-bag in her hand, she was told, civilly enough, that the room was already all but let to another party, and that she had better try elsewhere. A fourth attempt succeeded. The landlady of No. 25 was either more needy or less distrustful; to be sure, she required an assurance that the young lady received no visits, and was willing to pay a fortnight's rent in advance. Lavinia drew out her purse, and paid the money immediately — not without difficulty, indeed, everything round her reeled so. After this preliminary, she was admitted into a clean, tidy room, surprisingly cheap to the poor tyro in poverty. If she wanted for anything, there was a bell, said the landlady. Nothing; Lavinia wanted nothing, only rest, she said, as she laid herself down on the horse-hair sofa.

CHAPTER VII.

Found and Lost again.

THE reader may perhaps owe us a grudge for having so long kept Mr. Thornton out of sight, and for having left unsolved a riddle or two connected with that gentleman. Had he really gone to the United States in search of Paolo, as the last visa of his passport, entered at the *Bureau des Passeports*, would lead one naturally to believe? And, if so, what could have been his motive, and that of the clerk of the consulate, and of the solicitors in London, for making a mystery of his destination? We are going to meet categorically, and we hope satisfactorily, this double query; our only reason for not having done so before, being that we cannot relate the history of several people at one and the same time.

Mortimer had, after leaving the Rue de Rohan for the Rue Neuve des Augustins, still continued to receive communications connected with his advertisement about Paolo, most of them unworthy of notice, but which he persevered in forwarding to the police. One letter, however, dated from Havre, alike from its feeling tone, and the quarter from whence it assumed to come, commanded his attention. The writer, who styled himself the agent of a company for emigration to the United States, and who professed himself to be a philanthropist, explained how his sympathy had been aroused by the perseverance of the advertiser, and how consequently he had set on foot an inquiry in his own office, with the view of ascertaining whether any one answering to the description of the person missing had applied for a

passage in any of the company's steamers. The result of the inquiry was, that, in fact, a young man whose appearance tallied with the description given of Signor Paolo Mancini, had called at the office on the 26th of March last, and had secured a second-class berth for New York in the *Atalanta*. The name of this person, as appeared from the books, was Paolo Manni, and not Mancini; but the slight difference in the surnames might be, perhaps, owing to some incorrectness of the clerk who had registered the passenger. Unfortunately, wrote Thornton's unknown correspondent, he had not himself seen the Italian, but should the advertiser think it worth his while to follow out this clue, and come to Havre, the clerk above mentioned would be too happy to impart all his recollections as to the personal appearance of the gentleman booked as Paolo Manni. Here followed the signature of the writer, and the street and number of the office at which application was to be made. A postscript further intimated that the steamer *Nonchalant* would leave Havre for New York on the day after the morrow.

Mortimer thought the indications too precious to allow of a moment's hesitation. He went straight to the police, had his passport *viséd* for the United States, in order to be ready for instant embarkation, if necessary, and then set off for Havre, where he was not long before he ascertained that he was the victim of a heartless hoax. The signature, the street, the number, and the office, were one and all a fabrication. Thornton came back utterly discomfited, and more sombre and dejected than ever. He took to going frequently to the Morgue. The ill-omened spot, and the lurid sights it presented had a sort of savage fascination for him. The

impression, which he had had from the first, that Paolo had thrown himself into the river, returned again and again with the pertinacity and vigour of mania, and his diseased fancy could not help speculating upon how Paolo's dead body would look, stretched on the lugubrious flagstones of the sinister establishment. Thornton was there one morning when a body, just dragged out of the river, was being carried in. It had lain in the water but a few hours, and was not at all disfigured. It was the corpse of a young girl, not yet twenty, middle-sized, slender, and strikingly handsome. The wet masses of her rich auburn hair adhering to her temples and neck, brought out in strong relief the alabaster delicacy of her complexion. She was dressed in white. Great was the concourse of people round the beautiful dead girl, unanimous the pity, and loud the guesses as to the cause of her untimely end. A disappointment in love was, of course, the solution given.

Long and wistfully did Mortimer gaze at the solemnly quiet face, and lo! as he gazed, a strange work of transformation, such as we have examples of in our dreams, slowly accomplished itself in the solemnly quiet face, until the unknown features shaped and settled themselves into those familiar ones, which had been for the last nine years engraved in outlines of fire on his brain and heart. All notion of time was obliterated withal, and it seemed but yesterday that she, whom he identified in the corpse now lying on those cold stones before him, was hanging, a happy, confiding girl, on his arm; and he had had the heart, madman that he was, to fling her from him, and consign her to despair. And here was his work! and so then he was standing a convicted

murderer before his victim! Under the sway of this horrible delusion, Mortimer rushed forth and precipitated himself into the Seine!

In large and crowded cities, a man may drop from sheer exhaustion, and breathe his last on the unfriendly pavement little heeded; but if he takes to the river for his death-bed, he is sure to be interfered with by the very persons who would have shrugged their shoulders, and passed on the other side, in the first case. The reason of the difference is obvious; the inhabitants of large towns are *blaséd* and fearful of being imposed upon; a man writhing and foaming at the mouth in the street may be an impostor, whereas he who plunges into running water cannot but be in downright earnest; and once the possibility of a trick removed, human sensibilities reassert their rights and get fair play. No sooner was Thornton in the water, than a double shout was raised from a multitude of anxious spectators lining both banks of the Seine, and several boats and swimmers put off to the rescue. A barge full of timber was coming up the river; the man at the helm manœuvred, so as to place the barge sideways. Thornton, borne swiftly down the current, was stopped awhile by this impediment, then sank under it. A loud cry from the shores testified to the universal horror; a boat shot forward to the spot where Thornton had disappeared, and one of the men in her jumped into the water and dived. There was a moment of thrilling silent suspense, and then the brave fellow reappeared, and not alone. A real shout of triumph and admiration rent the air. With a stroke or two of the oars, the men left in the boat brought her close enough to preserved and preserver to lift them safely in, and in five minutes more the still unconscious

Englishman, followed by the excited multitude, was being carried to the nearest *corps de garde*.

A commissioner of police was already there, who, as soon as Mortimer recovered his senses, proceeded to an interrogatory. Mortimer's replies were at first collected and to the point. He said who he was, and where he lived, and cautioned the functionary not to interfere with the liberty of a British subject. But when questioned as to what had impelled him to attempt self-destruction, he began raving that he was a murderer, and that he had passed sentence of death upon himself. He referred the commissioner to the Morgue, where he would see his (Thornton's) victim. The commissioner, though strongly impressed with the belief that he had to deal with a person in a state of insanity, sent one of his staff to the Morgue, who brought back information which completely proved the groundlessness of Mortimer's self-accusation. He was accordingly conveyed in a carriage to his lodgings, and left there under the strict surveillance of two police agents in plain clothes, lest he should renew his attempt against his life. In the meantime, the English embassy was officially informed of what had occurred, and a clerk of the British consulate, the very same to whom Paolo and Prudence had applied for information about Thornton, was sent to the Rue Neuve des Augustins.

Mortimer answered all this gentleman's inquiries rationally; said he had no near relations that he knew of; and when asked to do so, made no difficulty to give the address of his solicitors in London; but once put on the track of his late rash act, immediately accused himself of murder, launching forth in the same wild strain as before. As Thornton seemed to have no friends

about him, the best thing to do was to telegraph to Messrs. Henstrid and Co. information of the state of their client.

One of the firm from Golden Square came at once to Paris and had the unfortunate gentleman examined by the English physician of the embassy, and by the eminent Frenchman, Dr. Ternel, whose specialty was the treatment of mental diseases. Both these gentlemen agreed that Mr. Thornton was labouring under delusions, and could not with safety to himself be left without restraint. Upon this a sort of family council was held, composed of the commissioner of police, the clerk of the consulate, and the representative of the firm of Henstrid and Co., and attended by the two physicians, who had already examined into the case. It was then unanimously decided on, that the best course to pursue, was to place the English gentleman under the care of Dr. Ternel, and for that purpose to have him removed to a *maison de santé*, immediately under that celebrated man's direction. Owing to the infinite tact and persuasive ways of Mr. Ternel, no difficulty or demur was made to the carrying out of this plan, by him whom it chiefly concerned.

The nature of Thornton's malady, one of those which relations and friends strive to conceal to the very last, accounts for the evasive and ambiguous answers of Messrs. Henstrid and Co. and of the clerk of the consulate.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that Mortimer's seclusion put an end to all further advertisements, or inquiries about Paolo. More than this, one of the strangest symptoms of Thornton's derangement was the dread and terror, with which the recollection of Paolo was attended.

He was often busied writing out petitions for protection against the persecution he endured, and claiming from Dr. Ternel the promise that he would prevent Paolo from having access to him.

Madame Françoise had felt keenly for her lodger, nor did she desert him in this his time of need. She was frequently at the *Maison de Santé*, striving to comfort him with a woman's ingenious kindness. But a month having elapsed without any apparent improvement in his condition, and her questions as to the probability of a speedy recovery meeting with no more explicit answer from Dr. Ternel than a doubtful shake of the head, the good lady lost heart and went to Evreux to redeem her long-made promise to be with her daughter during her approaching confinement.

Dr. Ternel did not shake his head in despair of Thornton's case, but in despair at not being able to seize on the indispensable clue for handling and mastering it. Such details as Madame Françoise had been able to relate of Thornton, previous to his outbreak of madness in the Morgue, though of service in forming a partial diagnosis, were of too scattered a nature, and too disconnected with the immediate cause of Thornton's disorder, to afford the doctor a good standing ground. Material evidence it was that Dr. Ternel wanted, in order to counteract effectually the lunatic's delusions. Till he could lay hold of that, and there was little likelihood of his doing so, he had scarcely any hope of a favourable result to his treatment. The unlucky Englishman seemed an isolated being. Apart from the quarterly payments made regularly for him, no one inquired about, or cared for him. Poor deserted Thornton!

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Left Bank of the Seine.

WAS Paolo really in gay, turbulent, noisy Paris, or had he fallen from the clouds into some convent on the top of Mount Lebanon? Such was the question that he often put to himself during the first days of his new employment. The house inhabited by Mr. Boniface was the quietest of a quiet collection of houses, through a court, down an alley, between another court and a garden, in quiet Rue Cassette; and the quietest nook in this quietest of houses, was allotted to Paolo for his daily avocations. The cell of an anchorite, as far as silence and retirement go, could alone stand a comparison with his little study. Not the faintest echo of the noisy world without found a way to it, and within, no sound but that of the scraping of a pen against paper. The maids who shook carpets out of the opposite windows, did so with a care; the very sparrows which lighted on the solitary tree in the centre of the noiseless court below, seemed impressed by the stillness that reigned, and chirped *sotto voce*.

Paolo had never come in contact before with a real devotee of science, and for the first time had an idea of that tranquil, unremitting race after knowledge, which the life of an intellectual pioneer can be. The specimen he had under his eye interested him the more. Scientific speculation was with Mr. Boniface a process as natural, indispensable, and continuous as respiration. Shut up as in a coat of mail in his world of thoughts and calculations, the only realities for him, he forgot

the external world and its exigencies, and would have dropped exhausted over his volume or his slate, without a surmise of the why and the wherefore, had not his sister been at hand to warn him that it was time to breakfast or to dine. A fish out of water was not more helpless than he was, when summoned from the lofty regions in which his spirit soared, and forced to take into consideration any detail of common life — such, for instance, as the being measured for a coat — then he would search after something sensible to say, and invariably miss it; but set him on any of his favourite themes — and all scientific subjects were so — or ask an explanation of his own speculations, and he would warm up and develop the most ingenious theories with true eloquence.

Of an afternoon, Mr. Boniface often had visitors, and as his study was contiguous to that of his amanuensis, and the conversation, owing to his deafness, was carried on in a loud voice, Paolo had naturally his share of it. Mr. Boniface's friends were for the most part men of science like himself — naturalists, archaeologists, orientalisks, mathematicians — each having a particular hobby of his own. Mr. Pertuis, of the Place Royale, he who had introduced Paolo to Mr. Boniface, was one of the most assiduous visitors at Rue Cassette. Often would Paolo lay down his pen to listen, and derive the greatest gratification from what he heard. Not that he could understand or take in the hundredth part of what was said on these occasions — he would have been quite another and a more accomplished man than he was, had he been able to do so; it was the lofty standard of their callings, the entireness of their devotion to the interests of the mind, the all-absorbing

character of their pursuits, the depth of their convictions, their enthusiasm, their patience, their simplicity, which commanded Paolo's sympathy and admiration. Paolo felt instinctively that these were the salt of the city, and that to the patient investigations of such men might be traced the germ of all the great discoveries that honoured and benefited mankind. Thus Paolo, in his humble capacity of copyist, had a revelation, and a bird's-eye view, of the world of intelligence.

In other and more personal respects also, he had every reason to be satisfied with his present lot. Setting aside the difficulty of quick communication with one who was half blind, tolerably deaf, and always absent in mind — a difficulty, however, which each day's habit lessened — his duties were easy enough; and the regard shown him by brother and sister soon made them pleasant. Mr. Boniface never came to him with a change to make, of which he had bethought himself after more pondering, without offering an apology for being so tiresomely particular, and without uttering many self-reproaches for thus taxing Mr. Mancini's obligingness. Mademoiselle on her side never let him depart at six o'clock, without expressing her own and her brother's thanks for his kind attendance. Mr. Pertuis also was very civil, and rarely called without slipping into Paolo's study to shake hands with its inmate. Thanks and smiles and handshaking, you will say, don't prove much regard: agreed; but they do good all the same, and go far to sweeten dependence. Nor were these outward signs of good-will the only tokens of satisfaction received by the *pro tempore* secretary. At the end of the second fortnight, his salary was raised, from sixty to seventy-five francs, an item of

some importance to one whose heart was bent on amassing funds as fast as possible for a journey from Paris to Rome.

In spite of this augmentation, however, and of the strictest economy, Paolo's savings at the end of the month proved much less than he had anticipated. More claims than he had reckoned upon had drained his purse — the cobbler's wife opposite, who blacked his shoes, and cleaned his room, had to be paid, and there was an occasional wax-candle, and his washing. This last expense was a very heavy one. Besides, manage as best he could, it was, after all, an impossibility to go on decently with a change of linen, and a worn-out pair of boots. And a pair of shoes, at the lowest price, was seven francs, and three shirts, at three francs and a half each, had made altogether a large outlay. If one could only do without eating; but no, one must eat every day, and several times a day. Truth to say, Paolo had reduced this necessity to its simplest expression. A hot roll — poor Salvator's breakfast, minus the roasted chesnuts not to be found in Paris at that time of the year — a hot roll munched on his way to Rue Cassette in the morning — two other rolls at twelve, swallowed before a book-stall on the quays, his usual and most economical circulating library; or while walking in front of yonder noble pile, the Louvre — and at half-past six in the evening, such a luxurious dinner as we have described already — constituted his daily food, at the cost of eighteen sous *per diem*. It is possible that some of the materials of the last-mentioned repast were not always unimpeachable, but the condiment of hunger seasoned them. Neither bitters, nor absynth, nor vermuth render the stomach of a youth of twenty-

four so optimist as a fast of ten hours broken only by three halfpenny rolls.

Paolo had taken a local affection for the old-fashioned and comparatively tranquil part of the town in which chance had thrown him, and seldom went out of its precincts. The Seine was his Rubicon. He liked to stroll of an evening over the half-deserted quays, and watch, from one or other of the bridges, the setting of the sun behind the heights of Chaillot, to contemplate the imposing silhouette of Notre Dame by moonlight, and follow the reflection of the lamps in the dark rolling waters below. His rambles and his admiration were not unfrequently shared by a companion, his neighbour of the "*Bonne nuit, voisin!*" a young student from Evreux, as he afterwards proved to be, who was supposed to be accomplishing his *droit* at Paris — equivalent, I fancy, to keeping Law Terms in Lincoln's Inn — and, under cover of that convenient legal fiction, sowing his wild oats.

A more sociable, sanguine, thoughtless, and original Bohemian than Théophile Courant had never pitched his tent in the Quartier Latin. As long as his quarter's allowance lasted — which, when he was most prudent, might be a fortnight — he had a merry life of it, refusing himself nothing; the rest of the time he shifted as best he could, living on fried potatoes and credit; a change of diet which in nowise affected his humour: merrily and carelessly as he had gone through his seven years of plenty, to use his own phrase, merrily and carelessly he traversed his seven years of famine.

The Frenchman disapproved of the Italian's somewhat ascetic ways and retired habits of life, and would fain have enticed him into forming acquaintances among

the *grisettes* frequenting the *Marché aux Fleurs* close by. It was to that humble stage, that the *soi-disant* student, weaned for the time being from the joys and conquests of the *Chaumière* and the *Closerie aux Lilas*, confined his exploits, seeking there thrice a week easy *bonnes fortunes*. He had, in truth, plenty of them, and was fond of relating his triumphs. The mixture of a Sardanapalus and a Diogenes in him, not to speak of the attractions of a *pâté de foie gras*, and *rognons sautés aux truffes* in his days of abundance, took amazingly with the fair and loving spinsters of the Quartier Latin. Paolo did not envy him his successes. Love, to his mind, meant something better, he would say, than a temporary association for the sake of pleasure; upon which Théophile nicknamed him *farouche* Hippolyte, favouring him with much ridicule and laughing at his own jokes. Courant was a clever fellow, full of talk, of wit, of paradox, boldly flying at all subjects, and agreeing with Paolo on none, save that of politics. All epicurean and sceptic as he boasted himself to be, the young Frenchman had strong political convictions of the same decided hue as those of his new friend.

As usual during what he termed his temporary eclipses, Courant was in a concentrated literary mood — had, in fact, on the stocks, at one and the same time, a poem, a comedy, and a novel — and spiced his pennyworth of fried potatoes with visions of the Cross of the Legion of Honour, and a seat at the Institute. He loved to dilate on his plots, especially on that of his *Prédestiné*, a novel of passion. According to him, passion was the only field in which Balzac had left anything to glean. All other forms of fiction, whether of worldly life or private life, whether of mo-

als or philosophy, that great dissector of the human heart had exhausted. Balzac was Courant's prophet, and the *Physiology of Marriage* the book of books with him.

Well, then, to return to the student's favourite theme. The "Prédestiné" was a Parisian poet, young, handsome, rich, and highly gifted withal, intensely unhappy from the absence of that sister soul, caressed in dreams, and which was to complete his existence. Stormy had been his youth, an Ixionlike race after his half-ball; he had demanded it from the aristocratic salons of Europe, from the workshop, the thatched cottage, from the pampas of America, and the orgies of the *salon doré*. All in vain: the "Prédestiné" walked through life gloomy, incomplete, alone. One day, as he emerged from the depths of a forest, he heard a merry peal of bells from a little village church. He enters it — there is a wedding going on. The clerk to the notary of the village, a common-looking personage enough, is being married to the daughter of his employer, a slender, pale, and far from handsome blonde. The "Prédestiné" — mark this — objects, always has objected, to blondes in general; but the more he looks at this one, strange to say, the more he feels attracted. Surely there is something fatal in the fascination she exercises over him. His whole soul flies towards her as to its centre. In short, as the benediction is pronounced, he has received a full irrefragable revelation, that the bride of the notary's clerk is his the "Prédestiné's" heaven-destined better half.

"How was it revealed to him, the fool?" interrupted Paolo.

Courant, unmoved, continued: —

"Like a wolf who does not lose sight of his prey, he follows the bridal party to the little country inn, where the modest family banquet is to take place. As he does so, contending thoughts sweep over his brain, like wind-driven clouds over the sky. No, he will not be defrauded of his own — his rights, registered in heaven, are anterior to those of that paltry *épicier*. She shall be his. Acting upon this resolve, the 'Prédestiné' forthwith procures a quantity of a narcotic; hires a small chamber contiguous to the dining-room, where the wedding repast is to take place; pours some of the soporific in the champagne glasses, ten in number, and lies in wait for the effect. The dinner proceeds slowly and prosily, at last he hears the report of the champagne corks — toasts are drunk — and then little by little the murmur of voices subsides, one head after another drops on the table, and the whole company is fast asleep. The 'Prédestiné' seizes the moment, pounces upon his prey, lifts her up in his arms, and carries off his precious charge to his retreat."

"An infernal trick, worthy of ten thousand guillotines," cried Paolo.

"Rather so," said Théophile; "'strike hard to strike home,' is my motto. I see my plot is a taking one. I have not done yet — there's something still more spicy in store. Harken to this:" "After a time, the bridegroom, awaking, misses his bride, seeks her with tottering steps, notices a door ajar, pushes it, and enters. The door was that of the chamber of the 'Prédestiné,' which he had forgotten to lock. A tiger disturbed in his den is not more terrible than the 'Prédestiné' at sight of his rival; the clutch of a tiger's claws not more deadly than the grasp of the 'Prédestiné's' fingers round

the intruder's throat. A struggle of ten seconds, a stifled groan, and there lies the morning's bridegroom — a corpse." "What do you say to that, eh? I hope it is lively and passionate enough for a first chapter," chuckled Courant.

"I say it is unnatural, absurd, abominable, nonsensical. What is the use of this string of impossible horrors? *Cui bono?*"

"He asks *cui bono?*" retorted Courant, laughing. "Why, to carry away the reader from the first, to lay violent hands on his attention, to have a sale of twenty thousand copies; in a word, to succeed."

"You will never do so by means of giving people nightmares," said innocent Paolo; "there are other and purer sources of interest, thank God, than treachery, murder, and such like amenities. Listen to this;" and enthusiastic, and overflowing with recollections, as all true Italians are, of the *Promessi Sposi*, Paolo gave his friend an outline of Manzoni's celebrated novel; namely, the simple story of two obscure existences, a poor silk-weaver and his affianced bride, momentarily brought in contact with, and dragged along by, the current of the evil passions of a rude age, and making their way out of the turbid whirlpool through humble faith and love, and landing in safety after many trials, wiser, better, humbler, happier.

"I daresay it is all very fine," observed Théophile; "but it has a radical defect; it might compete for the *prix Monthyon* — it is too moral."

"Too moral!" exclaimed Paolo, his eyes widening with amazement.

"Yes: far too moral, and tame in proportion," averred Courant; "no cloves and pepper; no *chic*; no

touch of what I call *real* passion in it; none of the *positions risquées*, in which the public delight. The author had a precious gold vein within his reach, in the love affair of La Signora with Cavaliere Egidio — the passion of a nun; a capital hit, if properly developed. But no; he did not see it."

"He rejected, he spurned it," said Paolo, with warmth; "never would Manzoni have so lowered himself."

"So much the more stupid. Morality, as a rule, is unbearable in a work of fiction. The very reviewers, who praise it professionally, laugh at it in their sleeves. The palate of the public is blunted, palled, my dear friend; it requires, and must have, stimulants. Every nose turns up at your boiled beef; no — no! you must give viands with *sauce piquante*; game that is high; stuffed with truffles into the bargain; plenty of cayenne, — that is what is wanted."

"Rather than gratify such tastes, I would throw away all pens, and black shoes for ever," cried uncivilized Paolo.

"I am more of a philosopher than to do that," said Courant. "History teaches me that every age has its crotchets. I am of my age, and accept it as I find it without discussion. Such of its foibles as can help me up, I take advantage of; that's my philosophy."

"Your scepticism, you mean. And the dignity of letters, the eternal moral, the right divine of the beautiful and the true; what becomes of them, pray, in your system?" interrogated Paolo.

Courant looked at him with compassionate interest, and said, —

"I never saw such fly-swallowers as you Italians,

with your inexhaustible stock of enthusiasm. There's something in it, though, artistically speaking, and I have a mind to put you in my next novel. In sober truth, let me tell you, that you drivell — *tu patauges*. The high-flown theories about Art of a few visionaries, a few fanatics, are no gospel. My theory is far simpler, all summed up in that famous verse of the great master: *Tous les genres sont bons hors le genre ennuyeux.*"

"Down to the cynical," expostulated Paolo.

"And why not, so long as the form is good, and success attends it? Did not Horace skirt it, Ovid dive into it, Longus, the sophist, revel in it? and don't we admire them to this day?" asked Courant.

"But they were pagans, my dear friend. And so then you reduce literature to an affair of style?"

"And success," quoth Courant.

"And the Venus de' Medici, and the Hottentot Venus, provided they attract the crowd, are equally welcome in your eyes."

"*Dixisti.*"

In spite of these disagreements, or perhaps owing to them, the two neighbours were on the most friendly terms, sought after each other, and regularly spent the Sundays, Paolo's only holiday, in walking through the galleries of the Louvre and Luxembourg. Théophile was even introduced to Mr. Prosper and his wife, at whose establishment Paolo generally ended his evening strolls.

Thus time wore on up to the middle of August, when our Roman painter, who had almost forgotten that he was one, found himself master of the round sum of a hundred and twenty-two francs. This, according to his calculations, was more than sufficient for his

journey to Rome. His economics of the fortnight just entered upon, and which he reckoned would amount to some forty francs, were destined for an object, on which his heart had long been set; for the purchase of some useful article for the self-denying Madame Prudence. Nor must it be supposed that Paolo had been remiss in showing gratitude in substantial ways towards Prosper's family — many a franc had been spent on the little ones, which otherwise would have accelerated his hour of hoped-for freedom. We have done as Paolo himself, laid no stress on what was so immeasurably below his wishes and their claims.

Such being the satisfactory state of his affairs, it occurred to our Roman, that it might be as well to go betimes, and look after his passport. Accordingly, one morning, instead of indulging in his habitual lounge between the Pont Neuf and the Pont des Tuileries, while he made his noonday repast of the two halfpenny rolls, he took them and himself through the Rue de l'Université, his road to the residence of the Pontifical Nuncio in Paris. Introduced to a gentleman in black, he gave his name, calling, and address at Rome, explaining that he had come to Paris in the preceding March, had lost his passport, and wanted to replace it in order that he might go back to Rome.

The affair seemed a very simple one to the applicant; not so to the gentleman who received the application. He did not mince the matter, but said at once that what was asked was impossible. Before furnishing any one with a passport, it was indispensable, the gentleman in black explained, first, that it should be clearly ascertained that the applicant was the person he represented himself to be; secondly, that he did not be-

long to any of the categories of refugees, who were excluded from the Papal States. The first desideratum might and would be, he had no doubt, in the present instance, satisfactorily fulfilled by unexceptionable guarantees; but none could supply the second, save the government of his Holiness, to which it would be his duty to submit the case, and apply for instructions.

A poor devil who has been living for two months on a hope, and sees it torn from him at the very moment he expects its realization, may well be pardoned a moment of impatience, when he asks, rather snappishly, as Paolo did, what possible length of time this weighty affair of State was likely to require. The patient answer was, that no time could be fixed, but if Signor Paolo Mancini would give himself the trouble to call again at the end of three weeks, or a month, there might probably be some communication to impart on the subject of his application.

This conclusion of the interview having by no means improved Paolo's temper, he made his exit chewing something between his teeth, which was not precisely a blessing, and it may also be that he did not shut the door, but allowed it to close itself with a smart bang. The gentleman of the Nonciatura received from these petty incidents a decidedly sinister impression of Mr. Paolo Mancini, which impression he hastened to convey to his superior, who, in his turn, transmitted it to his chief at Rome. A circumstance, which at first sight would seem as if it ought to have told in Paolo's favour, on the contrary strongly militated against him — it was, that his name did not figure on any of the lists and reports forwarded to the Nonciatura by any of its Paris agents; a proof as clear as day to every

one belonging to the Nonciatura, that he must have been skulking elsewhere than in Paris, most likely had been to London for fresh orders and watchwords of insurrection.

No one but philosophic-tempered Théophile could have stood the porcupine mood of Paolo, after this mishap. Beyond calling him now and then *massacrant*, and lecturing him on the excessive absurdity of wishing to go anywhere else, when one had the luck to be in Paris, the student never evinced any symptom of impatience. Perhaps his equanimity was sustained by the metamorphosis he knew to be near at hand, and which occurred with the arrival of his quarter's allowance. The caterpillar rose up a butterfly, which took its flight to higher regions, after vainly urging Paolo to send Bonifaces and passports to Hades, and learn what life might be.

CHAPTER IX.

Surprise upon Surprise.

As Paolo, one-and-twenty days after his first application for a passport, was walking at full speed down the Rue Jacob, towards the Nonciatura, his progress was suddenly checked by an omnibus crossing the street in a diagonal line. Without waiting for the huge obstruction to leave the road clear, Paolo glided round it, and found himself face to face with the tall horse of a tilbury coming in the opposite direction from the omnibus, and concealed by the big machine. The driver of the tilbury, shouting "*Gare, maladroït!*" reined in his horse quickly enough to prevent any more serious

mischief than the rash passenger's hat being knocked off by the head of the horse.

Paolo picked up his hat, and was proceeding on his way, when a voice cried after him, —

"By the Capitol! it is that enraged Telemachus in search of the Ideal."

Paolo stopped, and in his turn cried, —

"By Jove! it is Du Genre."

"The very same, at your service," said Du Genre; "get in, there's a seat for you, my fine fellow," stretching out his hand to Paolo; and as soon as he had him by his side, bestowing on him a fraternal *accolade*. "Since how long in Paris? And you didn't seek me out, you false friend! Where is Mentor? You look as pale, and thin, and shaved as if you came out of a convent of Trappistes. Lucky that the horse knocked off your hat, or I should never have recognized you under that monument; no wonder you run against carriages with that Babel structure on your caput."

"Always the same," said Paolo, smiling. "First of all, I must tell you that I am bound for the Nonciatura, and if out of your way —"

"I'll drive you to Mecca if Mecca is your destination," answered the realist; you are not going to get rid of me so easily, I can tell you. May I, without indiscretion, ask what business takes you to the Nonciatura?"

"To get a passport, if I can, to replace the one I have lost."

"You are not going to leave Paris, are you?" asked Du Genre.

"Most positively so," said Paolo.

"At any rate not yet, for I lay an embargo on you

for at least three weeks. You shall not leave Paris without tasting some of its sweets under my direction."

"I have had quite enough of its bitters," said Paolo.

"You talk and look as mysteriously as one of Byron's heroes. Paris, I told you often, is exactly the place for such as you. It will cure you of many of your crotchets; it will send you back to Rome a new man, a wiser man."

"Thank you," said Paolo, "but I have no wish to part with my old skin, or old crotchets. I have an affection for one and the other. But here we are at the Nonciatura."

The two friends alighted and went up to the office. On giving his name, Paolo had a letter handed to him by the same gentleman in black, whom he had seen on his previous visit three weeks before; and who said, that the letter had been waiting there for some time, as, Mr. Mancini's address not being known, there was no possibility of forwarding it. Taking it for granted that it was a written answer to his former application, Paolo broke the huge black seal, looked at the signature after glancing at the first few lines, then exclaimed, in a tone of disappointment, —

"But this has no reference whatever to my request. What about the passport I have applied for?"

As to the passport, replied the urbane gentleman in the black suit, he was sorry he was obliged to say that it could not be granted. Strict injunctions to the contrary had been received from his government at home.

If ever man was provoked, Paolo was. He fretted and fumed and demanded to know the why and wherefore of this order: a usual weakness in those smarting

under injustice; they are always wanting reasons, as if those who inflicted injustice always knew the why.

The business of the gentleman in black was to see orders executed, and not to inquire into their cause. If Signor Mancini considered himself aggrieved, he was at liberty to forward a petition.

Paolo, wishing petitions and petitioners at a certain place not usually mentioned aloud at the Nonciatura, bolted out of the office.

"A precious state of things," he said, getting into the tilbury after his friend, "and for which we have to thank your country, Du Genre."

Du Genre hung his head.

"A famous *boulette* it was," said he, rather sulkily; "nothing like clever people for getting themselves and their friends into a mess. Where do you want to go?"

"Can you drive me to Rue Cassette?"

"Willingly, if you will direct me. I thought I knew the town well, but I never heard of that street before. It must be at the antipodes of Paris, out of the pale of the habitable world. Are you in search of the fossil remains of antediluvian megatheriums?"

"I am going to Mr. Boniface, my employer, who lives there."

Du Genre opened his eyes wide. There was no help for it now. Paolo had to explain, and in so doing, he had necessarily to touch on some of those circumstances — Thornton's disappearance among others — which had rendered a search for means of gaining his daily bread imperative.

Du Genre looked like one fallen from the clouds, but he was not slack in offering his purse, which Paolo

declined at once. They were still deep in interesting topics when they reached Mr. Boniface's door.

"Here is my address," said Du Genre; "but can't I see you again to-day?"

"At a quarter past six on the Pont Neuf," said Paolo, laughing.

"The impressive silence of Pompeii," said Du Genre, looking round him; "the air full of the odour of mummies." Then he called out, as Paolo alighted, "Mind, old fellow, you have dropped your big despatch; by-the-by, you have never read it."

Paolo picked up the letter, saying —

"As far as I could see, it was the notification of Bishop Rodipani's death. It is signed 'Guarini,' a name quite unknown to me."

"Guarini?" repeated Du Genre; "why, that is the name of a celebrated lawyer in Rome. Allow me to observe, friend Telemachus, that it is always an injudicious act to read any letter partially, especially so when it is one announcing the decease of a relation. Who knows but that you are down in the bishop's will for a handsome legacy."

"The most likely thing in the world," said Paolo, shrugging his shoulders.

"More unlikely events have happened," said Du Genre. "Come, I wager two to one that it is so now; read it, or let me read it."

"See for yourself," said Paolo, giving Du Genre the letter; "I can't wait, I am already behind my time."

Du Genre, throwing the reins to his little groom, followed Paolo through the *porte cochère*, the first court, the alley, and the second court, taking in the contents

of Signor Guarini's communication the while; then gave a jump as if a mine had exploded under his feet, —

"It's true, by Jove! I have won; you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth. Hail to Bishop Rodipani's illustrious heir!"

"Chut, nonsense," said Paolo, looking back.

"Believe your own eyes. *E-re-de u-ni-ver-sa-le. Excusez du peu.*"

Nothing less than the evidence of his own senses could convince young Mancini of the truth of his friend's assertion. Strange, unlikely, almost unnatural as the fact was, there it was, the clear statement staring him in the face. Who can fathom the mysteries of a death-bed?

Paolo stood mute and blank, as if confronted by the head of Medusa.

"What is the matter with the man now?" cried the Frenchman; "a fortune has fallen at your feet, and you look as if you saw a ghost."

"I wish Bishop Rodipani had made another will," was Paolo's answer. "I feel as if I ought not to accept this fortune."

"That's a little too *cocasse*," cried Du Genre, in a sort of comic despair; "the man's lunatic. And pray, why is it incumbent upon you to refuse such a god-send?"

"Because it comes from the persecutor of my parents."

"Listen to him," ejaculated the Frenchman. "Never mind the instrument Providence employs, my Tele-machus. Money never smells bad from whatever source it comes, was the remark of a Roman emperor, who was far from being considered a goose. If the donor

has given you cause of complaint, reason the more for accepting the peace-offering meant in reparation; would you have him broil in purgatory to all eternity?"

"I will think about it," said Paolo, one foot on the stairs; "I must leave you now."

"I shall go with you," said Du Genre, following; "I am not going to forsake you in this dangerous frame of mind; you are not *compos*, you are not indeed."

"You can't come in with me; it is against all rules," expostulated Paolo, on the landing.

"You'll see whether I can or not," said the realist, pulling the bell. "I tell you, you are not fit for work just now. I'll ask this employer of yours to give you a holiday."

Mr. Boniface's lucky star ordained that the bell should be answered by Mdlle. Boniface, who, to spare her brother all contention of mind, graciously took upon herself to grant Du Genre's request; she was sure, was Mdlle. Marie, of her brother's approbation. Upon this assurance Paolo thanked the lady, and the two friends drove to Du Genre's notary, a fine old gentleman, with white hair and a mild, benevolent countenance, which did any one good only to see. Nor was the face wanting in caution, still less so in acuteness; you might see the one in the slightly pinched lips, and the other in the quick glance of the clear eye.

He listened to a translation of the letter from Rome, and to the comprehensive statement which Du Genre afterwards gave him, with the utmost attention, his eyes half closed, which he opened wide enough, however, when he heard the nature of Paolo's scruples; and

looked so searchingly at the young man, as to make him redden and cast down his eyes.

"Had the testator any other relation than this young gentleman?" inquired the old lawyer.

His query being answered in the negative, he added, —

"The question at issue is one that scarcely comes within the domain of a notary; it is nothing more nor less than a case of conscience, the solution of which had better have been asked of a priest. However, as men of my profession have often been styled, and are, in a certain sense, the directors of the consciences of their clients — as to worldly affairs I mean — I think I shall not be passing beyond the boundaries of my own calling, if I give an opinion about this matter. It will be done in a very few words."

Turning himself round so as to address Paolo in particular, he continued, —

"To spurn a fortune, my dear sir, may be, according to the circumstances, a very wise or a very foolish thing. To the enthusiastic and the unreflecting, self-abnegation may seem a virtue, *quand même*, but it is not so. An act, for being generous — for entailing, I mean, a sacrifice on him who does it — is not essentially good; what makes it so, is its consonance to reason. It is consonant to reason, that to avert a great evil or to effect a great good, which cannot be averted or effected otherwise, one's fortune, or even one's life, should be imperilled or renounced; but it is contrary to reason that any such sacrifice be made — for what? — for the mere pleasure of making it. Now, the more I think of the step you are meditating, sir, the less I see what rational purpose it can answer. It confers no

benefit on any one else, while it deprives you of the power of good which resides in money; that's what your sacrifice would accomplish, and *ad quid perditio hæc?*"

"But," faltered Paolo, considerably abashed, "the person who has left me his property, was cruel to my parents in a way and to a degree you cannot realize; and whatever reason may say, my feelings make me shrink from accepting from Bishop Rodipani dead, a benefit that I most surely would have scorned from Bishop Rodipani living."

"Allow me to tell you," replied the notary, "that a feeling which is in itself a sin, cannot be received as your justification. All earthly resentment should cease before a tomb; this liberality from one formerly little friendly to you or yours, is evidently intended as an amends."

"Did I not say the very same words to you?" broke in Du Genre.

"It is a token of reconciliation proffered to you from the grave," wound up the old gentleman; "you ought no more to refuse it than a pardon to the dying."

"I must be honest," said Paolo; "I cannot say that my heart is softened to forgive when it is not."

"It will soften in good time," said the notary. "One token of the forgiveness of trespasses commanded to us all you can give at least — respect the will of the dead, it ought to be held sacred."

"Let it be so then," said Paolo, conquered, if not convinced (Du Genre drew a long breath of relief); "I'll abide by your decision, sir."

The letter from Rome contained simple, but minute

directions for Mancini's guidance. If the heir could not or would not return to his own country for the present, Signor Guarini informed him that he had but to send a power of attorney to one of Mr. Guarini's friends and colleagues, whom he named, and that gentleman would, in his capacity of Paolo's legal representative, see to the taking off the seals, the drawing up of the inventory, &c.; in short, would go through all the forms incumbent in such a case. This power of attorney was drawn up then and there by Du Genre's notary, signed by Paolo, attested by Du Genre and the notary's head clerk, and finally sent to the proper quarter for the necessary legalization.

Paolo then rose to go.

"Stop a minute," said the realist: "since that pearl of lawyers, Signor Guarini, volunteers to advance any sum you may require, which I consider very handsome on his part, had you not better draw on him for a thousand scudi or so?"

"A thousand scudi, and what for?" cried Paolo. "I have got plenty of money at present — more than a hundred francs."

"And how far will five napoleons go in Paris? Well, say five hundred scudi."

"A hundred is more than is necessary," replied Paolo, sitting down to write.

"I insist on five hundred," said Du Genre. "You need not spend them; money costs nothing to keep. Then there's that little fellow — what do you call him? — and his wife, who nursed you; you must deal handsomely by them."

"You are right; what was I thinking of to forget that debt?" and without hesitation he drew a cheque.

for five hundred scudi, which he left with the notary to be forwarded with the power of attorney. They then took a cordial leave of the old gentleman.

"Ouf," said Du Genre, as soon as they were in the street, "what hard work you have given me. Pythias and Damon, Pylades and Orestes, put together, never stood as much for one another. I am ready to drop from exhaustion; and imprudent that I was, I sent away the tilbury. Half-past four — scarcely a decent time to ask for dinner — but sit and eat I must, or there's no answering for the consequences. Are you for a *suprême de volaille* or a lobster salad?"

Paolo would have preferred to either of the dainties proffered, a quiet *tête-à-tête* with himself, to probe, if possible, a certain uncomfortable feeling, touching the resolve he had been induced to take, and which still lurked somewhere in his heart or in his brain; but this being out of the question without rudeness to his friend, he answered that he left the dinner to Du Genre. They proceeded to the Boulevards des Italiens, and entered a *café*.

"Not considered first-rate," explained the Frenchman, "but the cookery is excellent, and the *dame du comptoir* adorable. Come close and look at her."

But Paolo would not comply, and with his usual shyness, stood aloof from the red velvet shrine at which his companion was offering his devotions. At any rate, Paolo did not share Du Genre's enthusiasm for the divinity of the counter; on the contrary, he found plenty of defects in her — her eyes wanted depth, her complexion transparency, her head character.

"Of course," said Du Genre laughing, "she is but a woman, and not a picture."

"As to that, I am not quite sure," retorted the Roman.

"*Mauvais farçeur!* I assure you she is not painted. Not a bad hit, however. What was I saying? Ah, she is but a beautiful specimen of flesh and blood woman, without an atom of the ideal Madonna in her, and this is what constitutes her fault in your eyes. By dint of cultivating the ideal, you have lost the sense of the real. But never mind, it will return to you by and by."

Paolo shook his head incredulously.

"A little patience and a trifle of good will," persisted the Frenchman, "and you'll recover from your mania. *Il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte.* It is like eating oysters," continued he, the simile suggested by the very thing on the table. "You object to them without knowing yourself why; the moment you taste them, your scruples vanish and you ask for more."

"But supposing I do *not* taste them," said Paolo, sending away his plate untouched.

"Why, in that case — *que diable* — you are prejudiced; that's my opinion at least."

Du Genre was in mourning for that uncle of his who had had the triple indelicacy of summoning him to Dauphiné on the eve of Armida's *début*, of lingering on for months, and of leaving his affairs in a substantially good, but very confused state. The care of putting them in order — Du Genre was a man of method — had kept him in Dauphiné much longer than he wished, and it was only late in June, that is, long after all advertisements for Paolo had ceased, that he had been able to come and settle in Paris. While these explanations were being given, the room was filling

apace, and not a table, right or left, opposite or behind, was unoccupied. Paolo felt ill at ease among so many strangers, and hardly opened his mouth, except to eat, during the rest of the dinner. Du Genre talked for two, was quite at home alike with waiters and with customers, exchanging salutations and shakes of the hand with many of the latter. It seemed to Paolo an age before the good-natured rattle proposed to go.

From the *café*, Du Genre led the way to a tobacconist's on the other side of the Boulevard. As they were going in, he said, —

“Here is another bit of reality, which I recommend to your special notice.”

Paolo looked and saw a richly attired lady behind the counter, who, with the delicate tips of her fingers, carefully guarded from pollution, by neatly fitting gloves, dropped pinches of *caporal* into one of the small scales erected before her. She was good-looking in her way, with a face which the French designate as *minois chiffonné*, which translated, means a turned-up nose, hair drawn back *à la Chinoise*, *accroche-cœurs* on the temples, and mutinous dimples. “Would she be so amiable,” asked Du Genre, “as to give him some *panatelas*? he wished to choose them from a fresh box.” The lady, with great affability, sprang up on a chair, stretched her arms up at full length to reach the box, and in so doing displayed a remarkably elegant shape. Du Genre was nudging Paolo during this exhibition.

“And, monsieur,” she said, turning to Paolo, and offering him the *panatelas*, with a bewitching smile.

The monsieur addressed declined at first, saying he did not smoke; upon second thoughts, however, he chose one, and lighted it. This second thought — and it

came with a sigh — was, what was the use of putting any constraint on himself? whether he smelt of tobacco or not, was a matter of indifference to every body, himself included.

And so, cigars in mouth, and arm in arm, the friends lounged up the Boulevard, and down the Boulevard; sat down outside a *café* to sip their Mocha; in course of time got on their legs again for a new lounge, limited as before by the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin on the one side, and by the Rue Richelieu on the other.

"Are these two streets your Pillars of Hercules?" inquired Paolo.

"Exactly," returned Du Genre. "I never go beyond them; no Parisian, worthy of his birthplace, ever does, without some extreme cause. The Boulevard des Italiens is a compendium of Paris — it is Paris seen to its greatest advantage. Every comfort and elegance of civilized life is compressed within its narrow compass. Not a pretty woman, not a man of note, but pay their daily homage to it. Our lions in politics, in literature, in art, in fashion, in finance, gravitate hither as towards their natural centre. What the Lyceums were to the ancient Greeks, and the Thermes to the Romans, the Boulevard des Italiens is to the Parisians. Here it is that statesmen, writers, singers, actresses — that everybody and everything are judged, and sentenced without appeal. Paris is the world's brain, and the Boulevard des Italiens is the brain of Paris."

"I am unwilling to throw cold water on your lyrical effusions," said Paolo, with a little irony; "but to me, one of the uninitiated, your brain of Paris, after

two hours' enjoyment of it, begins to savour a little of monotony."

"It is another of the realities, which with cultivation will improve on you," said Du Genre. "Let us go to the flower market of the Madeleine."

"To look after grisettes?" questioned Paolo.

"A notion from the left bank of the Seine. For your information, the grisette, as a class, has no existence on this side of the water. Such stray specimens as may emigrate hither, soon soar into the lorette. Lorettes rule supreme here. Let us go."

They were at this instant standing in front of the Chaussée d'Antin. But for the growing dusk, Paolo might have distinguished the windows of the house where *she* had lived on the Boulevard des Capucines. A deep gloom fell on his countenance, and he answered, —

"No, thank you. I care neither for grisettes nor lorettes. I feel out of my place in this quarter of the town. I'll bid you good-bye, and go back to my penates."

"Go home at seven?" remonstrated Du Genre; "scarcely time even for hens to go to roost."

"It will be nearly eight when I reach my street, and I have to be up early in the morning."

"Early — and what for?"

"To go to my employer!"

"Your employer? What a ridiculous notion for a bishop's heir."

"Your pardon; my altered circumstances do not, I presume, allow me to dispense with common honesty. I have been paid in advance for a fortnight, and a fortnight more I shall work."

"Upright as a post — inflexible as an iron bar. You are a capital fellow, and if I were not Felix Pé-lissier, I would willingly be Paolo Mancini. The 500 scudi will just arrive, I calculate, at the end of your semi-monthly engagement. Should you want any money in the meantime — No; well, then, no be it. I wonder what your income will be — I hope something handsome."

"I wish you would spare me your calculations just now."

"And why so, most austere of youths?"

"Because they give me pain — because I loathe the subject."

"Upon my word, this sounds like insanity; and after all the trouble, too, that the notary took to clear the matter of all clouds."

"Clear or not," said Paolo, impetuously, "is nothing to the purpose. Not all the arguing in the world can argue away a feeling when it exists; and I feel that I am wrong in accepting this inheritance. You will see that it will bring me ill-luck. Good night."

"That which will bring you ill-luck," Du Genre cried after him, "if you don't gain wisdom before it is too late, is your false point of view of life. You look upon it as a tragedy, when life is but a farce — but a farce! Good night."

CHAPTER X.

Self-Discipline.

TWILIGHT had superseded broad day, and darkness twilight, and there on her couch still lay Miss Lavinia, apparently in a heavy slumber, yet half conscious, a dead weight on her chest, a dead weight on the crown of her head. If the widow who had let her the lodgings, went once on tiptoe to her sitting-room door, she went twenty times, listening in vain for any, the least sound indicative of life within, returning to her parlour after every disappointment with a still more elongated face, and resuming her knitting with more trembling fingers.

"Are you sure, Molly, that the new lodger has not rung for candles?"

Molly was ready to stake her life that no bell had so much as stirred in the house. Bless her heart, it was quiet enough to hear a pin drop, let alone a bell ring.

Mrs. Tamplin had no eyes but for the gloomy side of life. Of a lymphatic temperament, and anything but sanguine, even when young, independent, and on the whole happy, she had had all her little stock of spirits squeezed out of her by the simultaneous loss, in her fortieth year, of husband and fortune. "Despair and die," had become her motto ever since. To moan over the past, and tremble for the future, to create difficulties where there were none, and magnify into impossibilities those which existed, to fancy dangers everywhere and to anticipate misfortunes from every quarter, — such was the unfortunate lady's bent of mind and occupation.

All new lodgers were objects of suspicion for Mrs.

Tamplin, and the days on which she received any such, were fraught with particular terrors, lest, if a man, he should be a housebreaker, come with intent to rob and murder her; lest, if a woman, she should be one of a gang of thieves, sent for the purpose of admitting her associates. Miss Jones, however, it must be allowed, had so far found favour at first sight with the morose widow as to be spared the degradation of such an hypothesis. But if tolerably free from uneasiness as to any conspiracy against her person and property, Mrs. Tamplin very soon found a cause, and improved it, for alarm and gloomy speculation on another score. This cause, obviously enough, was the continued deathlike stillness of the new comer, as repeatedly verified by her own observations. "People did not engage rooms," reasoned the low-spirited landlady during the intervals of her stations at the ominous door — "people did not engage rooms to sit still in the dark, as if for a wager; it wasn't natural; people moved about, coughed, sneezed, called for candles, in short, gave signs of being alive; if they didn't, why, then, they must be in a fit, or —"

At this point of her argument with herself, Mrs. Tamplin recollected having once read in the newspaper, of somebody — was it a lady or gentleman? she rather thought it had been a lady — well, of somebody, hiring lodgings for the purpose of taking poison, or cutting his or her throat, whichever it was. Such things had happened, and why shouldn't they again? The young lady looked flurried enough for anything. That she, Mrs. Tamplin, of all the landladies in the world, should have the luck of such lodgers, where was the wonder? It would only be in keeping with all the rest.

The mine was rich, and the miner indefatigable.

She pursued a fancied lugubrious scene through all its details, from the first finding of the corpse to coroner and jury sitting on the morrow in the little back-room — pursued the theme with the minuteness and zest peculiar to the habitual dealers in horrors. The excess of her self-inspired terror at last gave her the courage, she had hitherto lacked, to go and confront the incubus she had conjured up. She seized a candle, hurried across the short passage, opened the little back-room with resolution, and went in.

Miss Lavinia, startled into full consciousness, sprung to her feet, and asked, —

“Is that you, Grace? What a fright you gave me.”

“Bless me! she is wandering in her mind,” thought Mrs. Tamplin, this fresh alarm swallowing up her satisfaction at the groundlessness of the old one. She said aloud, “It’s only me, Mrs. Tamplin, with a light. Are you ill, miss?”

“Oh, no! not ill, thank you, only a little giddy and sick,” answered Lavinia, reseating herself.

“You haven’t taken anything to make you so, have you?” eagerly inquired the landlady.

Lavinia shook her head.

“Are you sure, quite sure?” urged Mrs. Tamplin.

“Quite sure,” repeated the poor girl, looking up at her questioner with some amazement. “What makes you ask me that?”

“Sometimes, you know,” stammered the widow, nearly reassured by the frankness of Lavinia’s face, — “sometimes what one eats or drinks — one’s food, I mean, disagrees with one’s stomach — and, no headache?”

“A little.”

"Your eyes told me so. I am a bit of a doctor; not a complaint that has ever been heard of, but I have had it; I am a perfect martyr to ill health. Will you allow me to feel your pulse? Gracious goodness! why, what's the matter with you? your hands are as cold as death."

Those of the affrighted lady, if not cold, were manifestly trembling from the contact.

"I am only chilly," said Lavinia; "I'll lie down quietly for a little, and then, I dare say, I shall be well again."

But Mrs. Tamplin was of a different opinion. It was a chill, according to her, not to be trifled with; the best thing to do was to send for a doctor. This proposition Lavinia opposed with all the little strength she had left; while Mrs. Tamplin held to her idea with the energy of despair.

"Just to satisfy me, miss — being both of us strangers to one another. I dare say it is nothing, only it makes me fidgety, when I don't see clearly into things. It isn't much of a sacrifice to see a good gentleman just for five minutes. We have a doctor next door. Dr. Duncan will see what's amiss at a glance. We call him doctor, but he is only a surgeon; but it would take a dozen doctors to make the like of him, though they are not ashamed to charge a guinea. His visit is but half-a-crown, medicine included. Half-a-crown won't ruin any one. Ah! I see. I may send for him. There's a good girl. I'll be back in a minute."

Poor Lavinia, sick and faint, with her head splitting with pain, was no match for the excited widow; and to get rid of her teasing, gave at last a reluctant consent.

Mrs. Tamplin's vehement burst of eloquence, the reader has already guessed, was produced by a new fit of terror, which had seized on her. She had noticed in the last week's return of deaths for London, a few in the hospitals arising from cholera, and had been ever since in dread expectation of an outbreak of this fearful malady. Now, finding to her dismay, that her lodger's hands were stiff and cold — it being hot weather, mark, and well knowing that cold hands were one of the first symptoms of cholera; and considering further, that if there was to be a visitation of cholera, it was but natural that it should begin at her house; on the strength of these premises, we say, Mrs. Tamplin rushed to the conclusion that she had a case of cholera before her, on her very own couch.

Mr. Duncan must surely have had a presentiment that his services would be required, and have accordingly been prepared, for in less than five minutes after the landlady's exit from the little back-room, a short, thickset, bull-headed, goggle-eyed personage, with shaggy eyebrows and tufts of hair at the root of every finger, bolted in with a grunt, —

"Is that the person? Ah! how are we?"

Lavinia looked at the assemblage of grimacing, squinting, topsy-turvy, unnatural features hanging over her, in a frightened wonder, tempered, however, by a sense of their ludicrousness, and began an account of her sensations; but was instantly stopped. No need of that; he did not care a bit for symptoms. What he wanted was to go to the root of the evil at once. Had *we* had the measles? Yes, very well; he thought so; he would bet a wager that *we* had had the hooping-cough also. To the best of her recollection, she had

had the hooping-cough, said Lavinia. Very good; and he should not be surprised if *we* had been suffering from low spirits lately? He might have guessed that, without being a prophet, from the careworn face, and mourning dress of the patient. And what did *our* tongue say? The recondite meaning of this query, as explained by Mrs. Tamplin, who had gone through the process *passim*, was that Lavinia was to put out her tongue for inspection. As Lavinia obeyed, Mr. Duncan exclaimed, —

“All right; he saw it as plain as daylight: a trifle wrong with the great *sympathetic*. You needn't be uneasy, nor you, Mrs. Tamplin; *we'll* soon be on our legs again, and as jolly as ever. Just desire Molly to come to my house, and I'll send you a powder — to be taken in half a tumbler of hot brandy-and-water — very hot, and the stronger the better. And you,” turning to Lavinia, “mind you send all blue devils to Coventry; do you hear?”

After this witty sally, heightened by a broad grin, the facetious Esculapius withdrew, escorted by the gloomy landlady.

The short palaver in whispers held in the passage between the surgeon and his escort, must have been greatly to the satisfaction of the latter, for she returned to Lavinia in high spirits enough, to hint at the possibility of a speedy recovery — in a week or two. Mrs. Tamplin saw to the literal execution of Mr. Duncan's prescription, not sparing her charge one drop of the beverage. If the surgeon meant it as a practical means of enforcing his recommendation about blue devils, his success was complete. Miss Jones at once fell asleep and slept all night like a post. She awoke next morning refreshed, and wanted to get up, but Mrs.

Tamplin would allow of no such imprudence. Mr. Duncan, when he called, said Mrs. Tamplin was perfectly right. Two days after, the medical practitioner paid another visit, and still ordered rest. Miss Lavinia had to keep her bed for a whole week.

This forced leisure was not lost upon her; no lack of subjects, Heaven knows, had she for earnest and anxious speculations, wherewith to beguile the long hours. Her old self to unlearn, as it were, and a new one to create in keeping with her new circumstances — a particularly knotty point connected with the past to settle; some course of action to decide upon, with a view to earning her bread — these were the salient subjects principally engrossing her mind during her imprisonment in her bed. Nor without some good results, she hoped, save, indeed, as to the means of gaining employment. All was mist and gloom to her vision in that direction; not that she anticipated any difficulty in this respect; she was far too ignorant of the hard realities of the world, far too strongly imbued with one of Mr. Jones's favourite axioms, that "where there is a will there is a way," for any fear of that kind; but she was in want of any practical data to go by; she must be put on the right road by some one with more experience in the matter. All she knew was through having heard it mentioned *à propos* of some recommendations made to herself, that ladies of education in reduced circumstances turned governesses. But was she qualified to teach? She was rather afraid not. Governesses were expected to know everything, and she hardly knew any subject that she could venture to say she was capable of teaching — music, perhaps, and French and Italian. Would that be enough?

In her honest endeavours to bring her spirit down to the level of her low fortune, Lavinia arrived at a more satisfactory result. The trials she had gone through during the last few months, and the reflections they had induced, had ripened her reason, and awakened her to the sense of the duties and moral responsibilities which life implied. Even when steeped in all its vanities, and untouched by grief, she had had many a sudden qualm of conscience at Paolo's earnest appeal to those duties and responsibilities. The life she had hitherto led, what a poor figure it now cut, viewed by this new light — if, indeed, such a worthless fluttering of childish impulses, and aimless pursuits, as had filled her days, were worthy to be called by the name of life. Happy still, if by it, she had wronged no one but herself; but she dared not thus console herself; she knew she had wronged others, one, at least, most cruelly, perhaps irreparably. And could she for a moment regret having lost a position, the recollection of which filled her with shame, and alas! with remorse. Had she not, on the contrary, every reason to thank Providence for having hurled her from it — even by a thunderbolt? for forcing her to begin life anew? for granting her the means of atoning for the past?

We alluded to a knotty point which greatly perplexed her; but this also she managed to settle. It related to Lady Augusta, the friend to whom her confidential letters from Rome were addressed. Their friendship had begun in girlhood, at the fashionable boarding-school to which both were sent, and had afterwards continued unabated. Out of a rather numerous circle of nominal friends, Lady Augusta was the only one who had not contented herself with sending cards

or conventional letters of condolence, but had gone to see her former playmate after Mrs. Jones's death, and shown real feeling for her bereavement. It seemed but natural, under the circumstances, that Lavinia should have no secrets with Lady Augusta, nay, should throw herself for sympathy and support on so staunch a friendship. Her first impulse had been this; but further thought made her question the wisdom of such a course. That Lady Augusta would befriend her in spite of everything, she had no doubt — but would it be in her power to do so? Would not that perfectly polite, but cold and formal countess, discountenance her daughter's doing so? nay, probably, put an absolute veto against any further intercourse with Lavinia? It was more than likely from one, who had no more than tolerated the friendship between the young girls, and though courteously condescending to the niece, had maintained a frigidly patronizing manner to the uncle and aunt.

After long weighing of the pros and cons of her anticipations with regard to the countess, Lavinia came to the conclusion, that, having doubts on the subject, she would not be justified in running the risk of becoming an apple of discord for parent and child — at all events of entailing upon her friend a painful struggle between duty and inclination. Having most conscientiously made this resolve, Lavinia felt freed, as from a load, from the necessity of making a confession of what she looked upon as a disgrace, but which was, in fact, a misfortune. To one person alone in the world could she have told all without dying from shame. Not to Paolo; no. She recollected very well his once treating the notion of the transmission of a badge of honour or

dishonour, to one who had done nothing to deserve it, as most absurd. But she remembered also — with what confusion, God knows — the contempt with which she had treated such a notion, and the warmth, she had displayed in her arguments against it. He whom she could have made her confidant of all men, he from whom she could anticipate receiving sympathy and pity, was Thornton. He had been to her, while himself sorrowing, so forbearing, so generous, so fatherly, that her heart melted at the recollection.

Some disaster must have occurred to him, she was sure, or he would have written. His last letter, in which he told her of his change of abode, and gave his address to the Rue Neuve des Augustins, was dated as far back as the beginning of May. She had written twice to him since then, but had received no replies. Surely, this silence foreboded no good. It seemed to her as if she brought misfortune on all those she loved.

This sad and long monologue with herself was, oftener than she might have wished, interrupted by Mrs. Tamplin, who, under the thick coating of morbid selfishness and vulgarity, forming the staple of her character, had a vein of kindliness, which she showed after her manner. She would of an evening bring her knitting into the sick chamber, and by way of raising the spirits of her young lodger, give her the benefit of the newest "mysterious disappearance," "frightful loss of life," or "shocking suicide," as the case might be found in the day's paper.

Mrs. Tamplin delighted in horrors — would willingly dine, and sup on them. She was ever ready to welcome the most marvellous amount of misery, whether produced by fire, shipwreck, self-murder, or legal exe-

cutions. Not a casualty occurred in the year, but she noted it down, stored it in her mind.

At other times, she reverted to the better days she had seen, and would enter into a minute explanation of the how, and the why, and the when of the wreck of her fortune, winding up by expressing some doubts, whether the lady who kept three servants in her house at Pimlico, was identical with the woman who let lodgings in Camden Town, with a servant of all work.

Lavinia was determined not to lose patience with her querulous vulgar hostess, and to show herself gentle and sympathizing. Rather a difficult task at first, but it grew easier after a time, until she even felt thankful for the opportunity thus offered of testing her powers of self-control. The effort was not without its reward — it secured her Mrs. Tamplin's good graces, who had never before lighted on so complacent a listener as Miss Jones. And by Lavinia, in the utter isolation to which she was reduced, even the good will of so helpless and low-spirited a creature as her landlady, was not to be disdained.

CHAPTER XI.

Hard Apprenticeship.

THE first thing that Lavinia did on being at last released from her bondage of bed, was to write to Lady Augusta and to Mortimer. I was not easy to justify the extreme step she had taken in quitting Mr. Jones's house, without bringing an accusation against him, nor was it easy to establish the impossibility of any further intercourse between her and her friend, without making

any allusion to the quarter from whence opposition to the continuance of their intimacy might be apprehended. However, she managed to make her meaning clear without bringing in third persons, choosing rather to appear rash, over-sensitive, or even ungrateful, than to injure others in Lady Augusta's estimation.

The account she gave of herself was of course entirely conformable to truth. She had lately discovered that she was not Mr. Jones's niece, in no way related to him or to Mrs. Jones. Her mother had died many years ago in very poor circumstances; her father had gone abroad when she was an infant, and had never been heard of since. She hinted at some disgrace in her case, which she said was as unnecessary as painful to relate. Professions of faithful, unvarying attachment, warm from the bleeding heart, traced amid a shower of tears, closed the letter. It consummated her divorce with the past.

That to Thornton contained but two lines. They were simply to say that she had written twice, but had received no answer; that she had much to say, but dared not write explicitly until a word from him, which she entreated for, came to relieve her from the uncertainty of whether the present letter would reach him. It did reach him, but alas! was like all others, either unread or unheeded. She had signed only Lavinia, both to Lady Augusta and to Thornton — her Christian name was her own still. The surname which she intended henceforth to bear, was that of her mother — Holywell.

Her next thought was of something to do, of some work to begin immediately. Not a minute of her time could she afford to lose. Drawing or painting, with

any view to making a livelihood by either, was, she knew, out of the question. Landscape, she was aware, sold best, and she was unable to paint landscapes. She might have copied figures tolerably well, but not invent; and how was she to obtain originals to copy? besides, how meet the dreadful outlay for brushes, colours, canvasses, &c.? Needlework would be better, it required no capital. Hers were not very clever fingers, truth to say, as far as needlework was concerned. Still she was a tolerable adept at crochet, embroidery and worsted work. Which of the three, she wondered, would sell best? Not being competent to solve this question, she went and put it to Mrs. Tamplin.

On hearing it, the worthy matrons's face lengthened considerably, and she gave it as her opinion that none of the three had any chance of a fair price, if sold at all. The market was glutted with such articles, competition kept prices down, and tradesmen turned the screw very hard upon the poor workers.

"Then I will put my question another way," said Lavinia. "Which — crochet, embroidery or worsted work — is the most likely to find a purchaser, whatever the price given?"

"I should say embroidery, if neatly done, and according to the fashion," said Mrs. Tamplin; "but it so soon destroys the eyes, and gives so little profit, that for my part I had rather break stones on the road than work muslin."

"But how much do you think a tolerably good worker might realize by it in a day?" asked Lavinia, not to be daunted.

"Why, from eight to tenpence at most, and working

twelve hours. I have heard of first-rate hands making as much as a shilling, but they are exceptions."

"But can a workwoman support herself on a shilling a day?" was perplexed Lavinia's next inquiry.

"It's a miracle when they can," answered Mrs. Tamplin; "and as miracles don't happen every day of the week, that's why so many young women starve or do worse. There's such a competition, you see. The men, though, God knows, often badly off enough, have more ways than one of turning an honest penny; while a woman has but one, you know — her needle; and the consequence is, that there are more needles than work for them. A firm in the city, I miss the name now, advertised the other day for fifty hands — guess how many applied? Seven hundred, my dear young lady, seven hundred, fourteen times as many as were wanted."

Apparently, Miss Lavinia did not look particularly cheered by this intelligence, for Mrs. Tamplin said suddenly, —

"It is not, I hope, on your own account, that you are asking for information about these sort of things?"

Lavinia did not speak, but nodded her head despondingly, in the affirmative.

"Oh! my poor lady, is it as bad as that?" exclaimed the widow, with more feeling than might have been anticipated from one so utterly wrapt in self. "So young, so — genteel-looking; what will become of you?"

"He who clothes the flowers of the fields, and feeds the birds of the air, will provide for me also," said Lavinia. "None of God's creatures perish for want."

"Goodness me! where do you come from?" cried Mrs. Tamplin, clasping her hands. "I cannot be responsible about the sparrows, but this I know, that in the last year alone, as many as 358 of God's creatures did perish in this blessed metropolis from absolute want of the necessities of life. You look as if you didn't believe it. I'll show it you in print. I can prove it. Where has it gone now?" muttered Mrs. Tamplin, as she fumbled in a drawer, one of her many repositories of lugubrious facts. "Ah! here it is, cut out of the *Weekly Dispatch*: Mortality from privation, want of breast-milk, neglect and cold in 1853 — 358. Read it yourself."

Lavinia was fain to drop the conversation, she felt that she must have a little fresh air, so she asked for a direction to the nearest place where she might get the materials for her embroidery, and went out in quest of them. Mrs. Tamplin had given her facts enough to startle her out of all her preconceived notions. Well might her landlady ask, with hands clasped in wonder, from whence she came. It is astonishing how little the young lady of the fine world knows of another world, which, for not being fine, is not the less real.

Screened from all rude contact by her carriage and servants, meeting everywhere the ready deference that wealth commands when abroad, smiled upon by all that is comfortable, elegant, and pleasant at home, finding in every house in which she visits, a counterpart of her own, what can a young lady do but argue from the known to the unknown, and pronounce this world to be the best and happiest of worlds? The greatness, the riches, the unparalleled prosperity of the land, are freely dwelt upon in her presence; but all

disagreeable topics which might cast a shade on the bright picture, are studiously avoided. The papers and novels she is allowed to read, or rather to turn over — for our fine young lady is always at a loss for time — are most of them strongly impregnated with “high life” musk, calculated to enhance her delusions; and such bits of hard reality as she may chance upon in Dickens or Thackeray, disagree so entirely with her habits of thought, and feeling and experience, that she puts them down either as claptrap, or exaggerations for the sake of effect.

Such was in the main the state of mind out of which Lavinia had been aroused by the awful revelations of that morning. As one tries to get at an approximation of the number of the wounded, from the ascertained number of those slain on the battle-field, so did she start from the ghastly cypher just learned, to speculate upon the amount of misery which it presupposed. I was frightful, and an immense pity for those who were suffering, an immense yearning to be of service to them, took possession of her heart. Oh! that she had known of this in time, — when she had the means of being useful! How much evil she might have prevented! how much good effected! Oh! that an occasion would offer to call into action the newly-born power of charity which stirred within her!

There was a something in Mrs. Tamplin’s manner and voice, when she greeted her lodger next morning, which gave Lavinia courage to say at once:

“Will you bear with me while I put to you a few questions, and will you kindly give me the benefit of your experience?”

Who refuses to give advice? The permission asked having been willingly granted, Lavinia began; —

"I can draw a little, I know French, German, and Italian pretty well; I am considered to play and sing better than most ladies. Do you think these things are sufficient to qualify me to be a governess?"

"Enough, and to spare, if you fall in with reasonable beings; but people have grown so exacting of late; and then it's the same affair about governesses as about needlewomen. For one that is wanted, fifty offer; a good situation as a governess is a prize in the lottery, 99 to 1 against getting it, and the salaries are so small. You have to pay your own washing, and always to be well dressed — fit, as they call it, to go out with your pupils, and to appear in the evening in the drawing-room. Then the drudgery of a governess's life — all work and no play; always wanted if they ask for an hour's holiday; and the holes they have to sleep in! — no fireplace often; and the tea they have to drink! — it's awful," concluded Mrs. Tamplin. "I knew a lady who had a governess; dear me! I never shall forget the sort of resigned, haggard look of the poor thing's face; it used to make my heart sore every time I saw her."

"Is there nothing else I could do — no other situation for educated young ladies?"

"I know of none other except that of being companion to a lady; but, oh, dear! I would not wish my worst enemy to be a companion. The ladies who want companions are generally old, infirm, and irritable; you would be more of a prisoner even than as a governess, for you would not have the daily walk you are sure of with the young people. You would be expected

to read aloud till you had no voice left, to be constantly amusing her, for ever doing something for her — nothing better than her shadow. I would rather be a sick nurse, they manage pretty well to have their own way.”

Lavinia was silent for a while; Mrs. Tamplin’s last speech had touched a spring in her memory; slowly and with difficulty she recalled some account she had heard or read, of an institution for nurses.

“You have given me a good idea, Mrs. Tamplin; I will learn to be a nurse.”

“Dear me, I am sure I never meant to put such a preposterous plan into your head.”

“A very good one, and not preposterous at all. There are training institutions for nurses — I remember hearing of them; and then the pupils, or whatever they are called, have to go through several ordeals to see if they are fit for the vocation, and if they are, they are sent into hospitals or wherever they are most wanted.”

“An hospital nurse!” exclaimed Mrs. Tamplin, in consternation; “no one in their senses would accept of you for one. First of all — excuse me, I mean it friendly — you are too handsome to be safe in an hospital; this world isn’t heaven yet, dear lady; in the second place, if you were ever so ugly, you are not strong enough for all the rough, dreadful work that goes on in hospitals.”

Though far from seeing the link of connection between her being handsome and the world not being heaven, Lavinia felt too diffident now of her own judgment to have any inclination to contest the point.

She resumed instead the train of thought abandoned for the moment, and said, —

“You really think, then, I am capable of being a governess?”

Mrs. Tamplin emphatically decided that she was.

“And you will be so good,” continued Lavinia, “as to tell me how to set about trying for such a situation?”

“Really,” Mrs. Tamplin could not help saying, “you seem as ignorant of the doings of this earth as a baby. The most natural course would be to apply to your friends and relations — to anybody, in short, likely to have an interest in you — and ask them to look out for some place of the kind among their acquaintances.”

“And if I have no friends, no relations — no one to take an interest in me,” said Lavinia, big tears gathering in her eyes.

“But that is impossible; every one belongs to somebody,” cried Mrs. Tamplin, beginning to be agitated. “Human beings don’t grow at the foot of a tree, like mushrooms. Compose yourself, and try to recollect.”

Lavinia shook her head dejectedly, forlornly; two large tears were running down her cheeks.

“Pray don’t,” entreated Mrs. Tamplin, who, much addicted to the melting mood, knew the danger of example. “There is no earthly use in crying, you know. My dear lady, you must see the truth of what I say; without a little interest, nothing is done in this world of ours. Besides, you must have references, you must; without a reference, not a soul will employ you.”

Lavinia wiped away her tears, and with them every trace of emotion, and said quietly, —

“Excuse me for troubling you with a last question. Is there no agency through which a person, situated as I am, can make known her want of employment?”

“There are the newspapers,” returned Mrs. Tamplin. “You can advertise in them for the situation of a governess; but I would not advise you to do so, as advertising comes very expensive, and in your case it would just be money lost, or I am much mistaken. You had better take a reading of a daily paper, and look through the advertisements till you see something you think might suit you, and then you can apply for it either in person or by letter, as the advertiser directs. But without references, my dear lady, it is scarcely worth while trying.”

However, Lavinia was determined to try. Not that she did not feel the full force of Mrs. Tamplin’s objection; her efforts would, in most quarters, she was convinced, be foiled by it; still she did not despair of lighting on the right person — some pitying woman, some kindly mother, for whom the knowledge that she was an orphan, one alone in the world, would be sufficient reason for befriending her. She sent for *The Times* next morning, and had not gone far down its advertising columns, when she discovered what seemed the very thing for her: “Wanted a governess in a quiet family, residing in the country, &c. Apply by letter.” She had made up her mind from the first, to seek for no situation but in the country or abroad. She was known to far too many in London not to dread disagreeable encounters there. The very idea of meeting Mr. Jones again, turned her blood cold. She

applied at once by letter for this situation in the country, and waited the result divided between hope and fear. Every double knock in the street reverberated through her heart. Nothing came of this application, however; days wore on, a week passed, and no answer was vouchsafed to her letter.

She resolved to answer another advertisement. A family setting out on a tour abroad wanted a governess who could speak German, Italian, and French; apply every day, from three to five p.m., Hyde Park Place. From Camden Town to Hyde Park Place is quite a journey — one undertaken by Lavinia in a great flutter of spirits. Excepting those who have had a similar experience, few can realize to themselves what must be the feelings of a girl who has scarcely ever set foot on the streets before, and then always well accompanied; few, we repeat, can form an idea of what her physical and mental discomfort, on finding herself for the first time alone, having to thread her way through a motley throng.

Lavinia's courage rose, however, on perceiving the streets to be quieter than she expected. But when she reached the New Road, an obstruction of carriages, and its natural accompaniment, a crowd, enjoying the fun, forced her to stop. A lively quarrel was raging among the several drivers; their looks, words, gestures, would have been more in character for cannibals than for Christians. They cursed, swore, shook their fists and whips at one another, until the terrified Lavinia expected to see them fly at each other's throat; but as soon as their wheels were in safety, they passed on as if nothing had been.

Was it a delusion originating in her troubled mind,

or was it a fact, that the farther she advanced towards the West End, the keener her impression that the passers-by took more notice of her than was consistent with good breeding? No, it was not fancy; they certainly did so — not the artisans, but the gentlemen, or whatever they were, who were dressed like gentlemen. One and another, as they went by, peered curiously through her veil, some, to do so more conscientiously, leant forwards, or raised their eye-glass. Five out of ten who were going down the street in the same direction with her, would linger by her side, stare at her over their shoulders, and when they had passed on, turn their heads again and again. In spite of her thick veil, and keeping her eyes on the ground, Lavinia could not help being aware of these manœuvres, so openly and audaciously were they carried on. Presently, near Regent's Circus, a tall, fair, whiskered dandy stopped so directly before her, that in order not to stop also, she had to make a circle round him. She had scarcely time to breathe, when there he was again at her side; she hurried on — it was no use, he kept the step with her, or went before, halting and turning round to wait for her. A mist rose before her eyes, she crossed the street, without caring for cart or carriage, and ran on with the speed of despair. She hardly knew whether her terror or indignation was the greatest. Where had they all gone, those highly-bred gentlemen she used to meet at parties, the pink of courtesy, whose deferential manner she had considered the perfection of refinement, so flatteringly obliging at dinner, concert or ball, so chivalrous in protecting her from all inconvenience in crowds, darting furious looks at the chance contact of some unruly elbow — where

had they all gone? Surely none of them trod the pavement that day. To see London from the height of one's carriage, or from the height of one's legs, makes a rare difference, I can tell you.

Lavinia reached her destination with the wan looks and jaded feelings of a remanded culprit, brought to the bar to hear sentence passed on him. The consciousness of innocence is but a poor shield against the utter dejection, which protracted anxiety, such as she had gone through, carries along with it. Fortunately, the lady who received her spoke kindly and encouragingly — with that good-natured, motherly sort of face, she could not speak otherwise. Lavinia stood in great need of encouragement; a frown, or a harsh word would have sent her into a violent fit of tears. In answer to the lady's inquiries, she stated with modesty her accomplishments, said she could play on the piano and harp, and sing.

"Very nice," said the lady; "isn't it, James?"

"Very," said the gentleman addressed, never looking up from the newspaper. Clara, her eldest daughter, explained the lady, had just begun the harp, and Miss Holywell could carry her on perhaps, without a master for the present. The lady then mentioned the salary she was accustomed to give. Lavinia made no difficulties, the sum was quite satisfactory. "Of course," resumed the lady, "I expect you to give me good references." Lavinia faltered out that she had none to give. "None in London, perhaps, you mean," kindly suggested the lady.

"Neither in town nor in country, madam," said Lavinia, now ashy pale.

"Surely, you are known to some one in England, who would answer for you."

"Pray, madam," cried Lavinia, so choked with emotion that she could scarcely speak intelligibly, "pray, be not prejudiced against me by what I am going to say. Indeed, I have done no harm. God is my witness, I have injured no one, but still there is no one I can give you as a reference."

The lady looked fixedly at the speaker all the while, but there was nothing hard in her look, rather the contrary. She mused for an instant, then said, —

"Strange, almost incredible, as your statement may seem, if you could only account satisfactorily —"

"Mary," said the gentleman, never looking up from his newspaper. The tone in which these two syllables were pronounced must have lowered the thermometer.

"All things considered," said the lady, rising, "I am sorry I cannot engage you."

"God bless you the same for your kindness," said Lavinia, bowing low, and departed.

Poor thing! so near the port, and wrecked.

CHAPTER XII.

On the Right Bank of the Seine.

WHILE Lavinia was thus hunting for some charitable soul who would employ her, and found none, Paolo, on his side, was looking out, with no better success, for some one who would relieve him of a portion of the 500 scudi he had received from Rome. Let us hasten to add, lest the reader should be tempted to

laugh at this statement, that the young Roman's application for such a service was restricted to a very narrow circle of persons, whom it is almost useless to name — in fact, to the group of good Samaritans who took him in, and nursed and tended him in his sickness and poverty.

Youth is so happy to give for the mere pleasure of giving! It was the only gratification Paolo anticipated from being rich. How keenly he enjoyed in thought the agreeable surprise he would one day manage for his little friend Salvator, and his betrothed Clelia! But to do so as generously as he wished, he must be no longer dependent on the complaisance of a man of business, he must be in the actual possession of his own. In the meantime, however, here were those at hand, who had stretched their small means to the utmost to help him in his distress; and it was lucky that he had it in his power to show his sense of the services he had received. But in this, as we have just hinted, he had reckoned without his host. Save Dr. Perrin, who, when made to comprehend the change in his patient's circumstances, did at last consent, though with reluctance, to receive a moderate fee for himself, and a contribution for his more indigent patients, none of the young man's other friends would hear of anything like cash.

Fortunately for Paolo's peace of mind, they proved less intractable on the chapter of *souvenirs*; and many were the useful household articles, *soi-disant* trifles for the children, and little comforts for the table, which, under that commodious nickname, were smuggled from the neighbouring shops into Mr. Prosper's establishment, and into Mr. Benoît's den. Among these last contribu-

tions figured a collection of black bottles, of whose contents Benoît could never hereafter speak without *quois* of enthusiasm, and repeated thrusts at the nearest wall; and also a magnificent meerschaum, which he seemingly disdained to use for smoking, but of which he must have been pretty vain, as he constantly wore it, inserted daggerwise, in the strings of his apron. After all, it might have been a better feeling than vanity which prompted his carrying it; as to the manner he had no choice — Benoît's costume admitted of no such thing as a pocket.

Paolo had given up his secretaryship at the end of the fortnight, and, for having plenty of money and time at his own disposal, he was none the happier; quite the reverse. He positively knew not what to do with himself — he thought once of hiring a studio, and settling himself to his painting again. But then, *à quoi bon?* Even should he succeed in acquiring fame, beyond what was probable in a foreign country, was the end worth the trouble? With Lavinia — his only incentive for wishing to arrive at greatness — had vanished every spark of ambition — his enthusiasm for art — as he believed, for ever. Who has not laboured, more or less, under such dispiriting influences? who has not, on the newly covered grave of some dear being, or not less dear dream, pronounced all pursuits worthless? The soul takes long to recover the shocks of such bereavements.

Du Genre was not slack in proposing a method of cure for his friend's ennui; it consisted of a series of measures, the first, the most urgent, the *sine quâ non* of which, was to pass what he styled the Rubicon; by which he meant that Paolo should cross the Seine, and

remove his quarters to the habitable part of Paris, viz. the right side of the river. To this Paolo said neither yes nor no. He had already made up his mind to leave his garret, and seek for a more eligible lodging; but he had, as was natural, a strong prejudice against the Boulevards so vaunted by Du Genre. Nor was he particularly inclined for the present to take a stall twice a week at the theatre of the Palais Royal, or to canvass for admission to the club of which his French fellow-painter was a member. The only one of Du Genre's various devices for killing time, which at all tickled Paolo's fancy, was that of taking riding lessons at a *Manège*, to which the realist, himself a subscriber, volunteered to introduce him. Riding was a manly and healthy exercise, and Paolo saw no reason why he should not devote a few of his idle hours to that, as well as to walking. It was, therefore, settled that this introduction should take place as soon as Paolo should have fulfilled the indispensable preliminary of making himself fit, as far as personal appearance went, for so fashionable a lounge.

"For, indeed," observed Du Genre, "your dress and hat are quite anachronisms in this part of the world, though they might cut a tolerable figure in a museum of antiquities."

Paolo took a survey of his threadbare black coat and trousers, smiled assent, and in less than eight-and-forty hours, thanks to the combined exertions of Du Genre's tailor, hatter, and bootmaker, he was in a fit condition, though rather an absurd figure in his own eyes, to be presented at the *Manège*.

Being Du Genre's acquaintance, his admission met with no difficulty, one of the old members being easily

found to stand sponsor for him, according to the rules. To this ceremony, and a few other conditions and limitations, submitted to by all those entering, the establishment owed its character rather of a riding-club than of a riding-school, the appellation usually, however, given to it.

The riding-master augured well of him from the first day. Light hand, quick eye, strong, supple limbs, and plenty of pluck, Paolo was wanting in none of the natural gifts which go towards the making of a fine horseman; he had, moreover, what is more rare, that intuitive perception of the best means to an end, which is to all undertakings what a good ear is to the mastery of music. He took to the saddle *con amore*, and made rapid progress. A few days sufficed, Du Genre aiding and abetting, to establish between the new pupil and the *habitués* those relations of *bonne compagnie* so easily formed in France; but none of these ever ripened into intimacy. The men he met there were most of them jovial young fellows of Paolo's own age; some, however, mere boys; but one and all were deep in the "hausse," and the "baisse," and in the scandalous chronicle of the day. The way they spoke of women was alone enough to distance our idealist.

Among the patrons of the *Manège*, who from time to time came thither, and even occasionally joined the youths in a ride, was the Vicomte du Verlat — we have heard this name before — a peculiarly good-looking elderly gentleman. His tall stature, and grey beard, which he wore long; his elegant, yet simple style of dress; the ease and distinction of his manners, reminded Paolo of his English friend, Thornton. Erect, supple, and active as any of the young men, Vicomte

du Verlat maintained intact at fifty his well-earned reputation of being one of the best riders of the day; and great was the excitement in the riding-house, when the tyros felt the keen glance of the master on them. The vicomte had noticed Paolo as a promising pupil; had given him several useful hints; came to the school more frequently than he had lately done, as if drawn thither by some new interest. Paolo, flattered and pleased by the attention of one so generally looked up to, met Mr. du Verlat's advances gratefully and warmly.

Meanwhile the whereabouts of the new quarters for Paolo remained, notwithstanding Du Genre's advice and persuasions, an open question. One day the viscount said to Paolo, —

"I never meet you on the Boulevard; I suppose you do not reside in this neighbourhood?" (The *Manège* was in the quarter of the Madeleine.)

Paolo turned red as he replied that he lived at some distance, but that he was intending to come nearer to the Boulevard.

"Allow me to say that the sooner you do so, the better," said the vicomte. "Come nearer to us; you will find it more cheerful; at least, I, for one, will try to make it so to you."

From this day, Paolo felt discontented with his attic on the left bank of the Seine, and made up his mind to pass the Rubicon. Du Genre, delighted with this resolve, gave the most unwearied help towards its realization. A good many apartments were looked at by the two friends fruitlessly, for some days; those patronized by the Frenchman being objected to by the Italian as too luxurious and expensive; those the Italian

would have chosen being rejected by the Frenchman as shabby and unfit for a man with any self-respect. At length, as usual in such cases, each party conceded somewhat, and the matter ended in a compromise. A snug *entresol* in the Rue St. Georges was selected as neither too cheap nor too dear, neither too showy nor too plain; and when Paolo had satisfied the porter that he was possessed of neither children nor dogs, and that he had wherewithal to pay a month's rent in advance, the keys of the apartment were delivered to him. Cerberus, moreover, condescended, for a additional sum of twenty francs a month, to clean Mr. Mancini's shoes, and look after his rooms. Paolo scorned the notion of having a servant all to himself.

And so possession was taken *ipso facto*, and the two friends, each lighting a cigar — Paolo had become an habitual smoker — intended as a votive offering to the familiar Lares, proceeded to make arrangements for the removal of what moveables Paolo had on the other side of the water.

"You are probably not aware," said Du Genre, as they walked down the street, "that you have given yourself a master and a tyrant in the shape of this porter of yours. Remember, however, never to call him *Portier*, but always *Concierge*, or he will call you to severe account. You had one real advantage in your hole in the Rue Dufour, and that was having no porter. Porters with our absurd style of houses are indispensable, but not the less a scourge. They are the natural enemies and persecutors of their proprietors' tenants, whom they look upon, and justly so, as the cause of their own bondage. It is perfectly logical, for if there were no lodgers, there would be no porters. They have a thou-

sand ways of embittering your life: they can stop your letters; forget to give you the cards left for you; say you are at home to the visitors you dislike to see; say you are out to those you wish to receive; keep you in the rain *ad libitum* of a night, — and woe to you if you seek redress. Either the landlord will back them against you, and you are at their mercy; or he will reprimand them; and then, farewell to peace, — the house will soon grow too hot to hold you. So, let it be your constant policy never to resist, or have the slightest difference with, the gentleman you have just engaged to clean your rooms and your shoes. Propitiate him at all costs. You laugh. I am speaking in sober earnest, I assure you. Let me see; there was something else I meant to say. Ah! you must not be quite unprovided for visitors. Order in a dozen of Madeira; yes, that and Vermuth will do for the stronger sex; the softer will prefer champagne or maraschino."

"But I have no intention of receiving ladies," said Paolo, with some surprise.

"Nonsense! you are too well launched now, to be able to stop midway. Now you have got a decent apartment, the next thing you must provide yourself with, is a fair companion."

"Thank you," said Paolo, blushing like a girl; "but I shall do no such thing. Let us act like Christians."

"Why should we act like what we are not?"

"Are we not Christians?" said Paolo.

"Certainly not, save in name," returned the Frenchman. "Show me any, the least spark of the spirit, which made a stable the cradle, and a cross the throne of a humanized god, and I will follow you into the

desert, and live upon locusts. Christianity, to most people, is an ingenious theory, with no more practical bearing on men's actions than the theory of colours, or that of the formation of hail. Look around you," continued Du Genre, pointing to the throng of men on the Petite Bourse, blocking up the pavement on both sides opposite to the Passage de l'Opera. "Here it is where it is decided whether the *Rente* shall rise or fall; here plenty of bargains with the devil are made; the single aim and passion of all these so-called Christians here assembled, but one — money — to get rich — make a fortune. Step on that bench and tell these Christians that there is written in a book, which they have accepted as their rule of life, that, 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven,' and see how they will receive the intelligence; it will not anger — oh, no! but amuse them vastly. Christians forsooth! The religion of our age is a mitigated Paganism; its gods, Plutus, Venus, and Bacchus. Take away the Bourse, the Dames aux Camelias, and the wine-shops, and society will collapse like a balloon out of which the hydrogen has escaped. You see I can moralize when I choose."

"With a vengeance," said Paolo. "But then, if the world be so wicked as you make it out to be, rather than seek pleasure, we ought to put on sackcloth, and cover our heads with ashes."

"The conclusion of morose Heraclitus," said the Frenchman; "laughing Democritus knows better, and says, Let us wreath our temples with roses, and do as others do. Take my advice, Telemachus; choose your Eucharis."

"Never," said Paolo; "every principle, every feeling, the very foundation of my soul, rises up in arms against the notion. There is a gulf between your ideas of woman and mine."

"Aye!" sighed Du Genre; "the gulf that separates sober reality from wild fancy. What do you know about women? Living like an anchorite, you have made for yourself, and *bonâ fide* worshipped, an ideal type, which no more resembles a flesh and blood woman, than the brilliant plant of the tropics reared in a hothouse resembles the common flowers of the field. Experience alone will cure you of your delusion; it will come. In the meanwhile, condescend to open your eyes, and contemplate the stream of inflated ladies, who pour out of the church of the Madeleine. Mark me, they are most respectable; examine them, and reconcile, if you can, your high-flown sentiments with their frivolous appearance. Do they answer best to the description of the angels and muses you dream of, or to that of the thorough-bred daughters of Eve that they are? The fool's cap, I know, does not make the fool; but when wilfully worn, it is not the less indicative of a certain frame of mind. Can you think of the respectable mother of a family stepping into her steel cage, and help laughing? And why should we be in earnest, and bruise our hearts to a jelly for those who are not in earnest about themselves? They do not expect it of us."

During the last part of Du Genre's speech, Paolo's attention had been divided between it and a group of three artisans, who had stopped to watch awhile the passing of some of their fair, so styled, superiors. He could not hear what they said, but judging from their curled lips, and half-angry, half-sarcastic survey of

waving hoops and flounces, he could guess pretty well at the nature of their opinions and comments. Paolo nudged his friend, who, following the direction of the Roman's glance, said, —

"When those in authority on board the vessel condescend to play the fool, no wonder the crew take them at their own valuation. After all," added he, with a shrug, "it's no business of ours — *après nous le déluge.*"

Mr. du Verlat's was the first visit Paolo received in his new abode. "A snug comfortable *pied-à-terre*," remarked the vicomte, approvingly; no gingerbread show about it. Looked like common sense, and the vicomte valued simplicity of all things. And what was his young acquaintance doing? Beginning to dabble in the wickedness of the world? Too late in the year for Mabilles or the Château aux Fleurs; but there was Valentino, and the Concerts de Paris. Not been there yet! Was he an ascetic? Very agreeable *rencontres* might be made there. Parisian belles, the vicomte was aware, could not stand comparison with Roman beauties, but they had the *brio*, the *entrain*, the *je ne sais quoi*.

Paolo shook his head despondingly, as though he would say he made as light of Roman beauties as of Parisian belles, or that it was not that he looked for.

"A! I understand — I feel for you," resumed the vicomte. "Early love, disappointment, deception. We have all gone through it. I have been young and romantic as you are; I have pursued my *beau idéal* as fervently as any one, have wept bitter tears on its flight, and — I have ended by *me faire une raison*. Follow my example, sir; try a little homœopathy — *similia similibus*. Life is too short to spend it in dreams, and

youth comes but once — *carpe diem*. Believe me, life has realities not to be disdained, and with your physical powers —”

“Perhaps it is a fault in me,” said Paolo, smiling, “but what if I prefer my dreams to your realities?”

“Pardon me; that proves nothing more than that you are in a morbid state of mind, out of which it is the duty of those who wish you well to arouse you. You cherish your disease, and that’s the worst feature of it. I did much the same when similarly afflicted. What would you say of that person — excuse the triviality of the simile — what would you say of any one, who, dissatisfied of the woodcock he had relied on for his dinner, would rather not dine at all than do so on a pigeon pie? Make an effort, sir, and shake off your trammels. True wisdom consists in asking of life no more than life can give. Constancy, you see — I could prove it to you both on anatomical and physiological grounds — is a virtue incompatible with our faulty organization. Have you read Balzac? Well, read him; there is great philosophy in Balzac. If you will permit me, I will send you some of his works. Adieu.”

Du Verlat was sincere in saying he felt for Paolo; he felt like a compassionate physician, who sees his patient refuse the medicine that would restore him to health, or rather like one who sees his friend labouring under a painful hallucination, and strives to reason him out of it. The good-humoured viscount was not a common *roué*, nor had nature intended him for one at all. He was born generous, confiding, tender-hearted. A coquette he had met with at twenty had made him what he now was, an elegant sensualist. There are men who cannot resist the deleterious effect of a first

deception; and in that of which he had been the victim, there were peculiarly aggravating circumstances. Mr. du Verlat had spent some of the best years of his life in inoculating himself with the belief — nay, had erected it into a sort of system, backed by anatomy and physiology — that women were irresponsible agents, and ought to be treated as such. This belief it was that had kept him a bachelor, in spite of the urgent entreaties of all his family that he would marry.

But his scepticism had nothing in it either malignant or aggressive. The vicomte did not make it his profession to go about slandering the fair sex, nor did he treat them cavalierly; quite the contrary. The systematic view he took of them, together with the inborn elegance of his mind, inclined him rather to that differential indulgence which is shown to infants. It was from pure good-nature, that he had so far gone out of his usual routine as to catechize Paolo; but possessing, as he believed he did, an infallible antidote against the malady, which, according to his own guesses, and Du Genre's confidences, afflicted his Italian acquaintance, could he keep it from one so young and interesting?

Days and weeks passed, and Paolo saw with amazement, as he looked back, the alteration in his habits, which his simple change of residence had stealthily brought with it. Somehow or other he had, since passing the Rubicon, with difficulty found time for a couple of visits to his friends of the Quai Montebello; and Mr. Boniface, or Mr. Pertuis, on whom he used to call once a week at least, he had entirely neglected. Somehow or other, he was rarely in his bed till an hour after midnight, rarely out of it before ten in the morning, and yet he had not been to the theatre more

than five or six times during these three weeks, and as to balls or concerts, he had never set his foot in one of them. He had besides lost his great dislike to the Boulevard; he would loiter there with much equanimity, exchanging greetings and cigars with other loiterers, having become by this time on speaking terms with most of the frequenters of the *café*, at which he took his meals.

Perhaps, had he scanned the inner man as closely as the outward, Paolo might have noticed modifications in the former, as well as the latter. Not that he had come the length of being in the least disposed to exchange his gods for the gods of others — not at all; but his holy horror of what he considered idolatry had much abated, and instead a new spirit of tolerance was springing up within him for tenets distant as pole from pole to his own. Balzac's philosophy, Arnaut's *double entendres*, Rosati's *entrechats*, and evening walks on the Boulevard, are not exactly calculated to strengthen spiritualistic tendencies. The atmosphere in which Paolo lived, notwithstanding his attempts to neutralize it, began to tell on him, imperceptibly, but steadily.

CHAPTER XIII.

Despair.

THERE was, at the time of the events in course of narration, an extensive linen-drapery establishment in the vicinity of Camden Town. Miss Lavinia walked into this shop one morning, a little basket in her hand, containing some embroidery of her own working — a chemisette with sleeves to match — the labour of many

scores of weary hours. Had her countenance been clearly visible, instead of only indistinctly through her thick veil, it would have betrayed the great effort which the step she was taking cost her.

The eager politeness of the counter official, who stepped up to her side soliciting the honour of her commands, on hearing the nature of her request, and the tone in which it was made, vanished; he pointed in silence to the farther end of the room, wheeled round, and left her to herself. Her request was to the effect that she wished to speak to one of the gentlemen of the firm; and she had to repeat it twice over to two different young men, before she could make out which was the person she was in search of. It being not yet nine in the morning, business was more than languid, and the master, seated a little apart from his shopmen, was diligently trimming his nails with a penknife. All that was visible of him in his semi-reclining posture, was a big bunch of crisp black hair carefully brushed to one side of his head, and a profile view of a chin and mouth of that deep blue hue, indicative of a strong black beard.

Lavinia went up to him, and, leaning over the counter, which half hid him from view, said, in a timid whisper, —

“I beg your pardon, sir; I have come to offer some work for sale,” and she produced her embroidery.

The partner of the firm rose, looked at her, noticed the small gloved fingers, took in at a glance the fine proportions of her figure, and conveyed the satisfactory impression he had received from the *tout ensemble*, by a wink and a grin full of meaning to some one standing behind the lady. The smart, bandy-legged little fellow,

thus telegraphed to, no less a personage than the head clerk, stole on tiptoe to Lavinia's side, and tried to peep under her veil; caught in the act, he assumed an air of unconsciousness, took the embroidery handed him by the gentleman of the firm, examined it, and asked if it was for sale. Being answered in the affirmative, he said, "by your leave," and without waiting for it, he pretended to measure the sleeves to Lavinia's wrist, and in so doing, managed, with *malice prepense*, to touch the fair hand and arm more than necessary. She drew it back hastily.

"Heyday, you needn't be afraid of me; my skin is as clear as yours, ma'am," said he; "if we are to have dealings together, you must be a little more agreeable."

Lavinia took no notice of him, but repeated her question to the partner.

"Will you purchase these things, sir?"

"Certainly," he replied, with another wink to his subordinate; "but you are aware, ma'am, that we cannot buy articles without identifying the seller."

"I can leave you my name and address," said innocent Lavinia.

"That's not enough, miss. Suppose some lady comes in half an hour hence, sees this chemisette and sleeves, and says that they belong to her, that she has lost them? I know what you are going to say, and I don't doubt you are speaking the truth, when you tell me they are your own work; I have no doubt you would appear to prove them to be so; but pray, how could we swear you were the person that sold them—"

"Unless," added the head clerk, with a very grave face, "you would be so kind as to remove your veil—just for an instant."

His too well preserved gravity was the ruin of the joke. The partner could not resist it, and burst out into a roar of laughter. Bandy-legs took the infection and roared also. Lavinia now saw they had been amusing themselves at her expense; she silently picked up her work and walked away. Her tears for not gushing forth were not the less bitter; only the more heavily did they fall back on her heart. What coarse, mischievous men these were, thought she. She had never guessed at the existence of such beings.

Mrs. Tamplin comforted her in her way.

"And so they made game of you! the more shame for them. I might have known as much. You are not the sort of person to be going from shop to shop on selling errands; you are too handsome and too good. They wanted to see you without your veil, and so they trumped up that ridiculous story about identification. A parcel of saucy scamps. Beauty is a sad gift to the poor and modest. They think they have done wonders, when they buy the worth of a sixpence from you, and expect no end of complaisance in return — and they get it in most cases. And how can it be otherwise? If you knew what it was to be hungry! A wicked world I can tell you. All the effect of competition, that's what it is."

Mrs. Tamplin, to her honour be it said, did not confine her consolations to worse than sterile theories about human wickedness. She did better than that — she did something practical — namely, took the embroidery and went about with it herself. Lavinia could the better appreciate this effort in one so low-spirited as her landlady, after her own recent personal experience. The effect upon herself had been to blight

that most precious and most tenacious flower of youth — confidence in mankind. She now shrank from them. Not to gain the world would she a second time have gone through the same ordeal as that she had passed in the Camden Town linen-draper's shop.

The embroidery sold after all — sold for a higher price than Mrs. Tamplin had supposed probable. Even the gloomy widow, elated for a moment by her success, found some chords within her which sounded like hope! The flower withering in Lavinia's breast revived, and her want of faith filled her with shame and remorse. She felt as if, in doubting her fellow-creatures, she was doubting Providence! How ungrateful of her! Was it not more than she deserved, her having already secured an active sympathizing friend? If instead of desponding at her first disappointment and crouching down like a coward, she had put on patience as an armour against all rebuffs, had she been strong in the knowledge that she was doing well, her failure must have been followed by success. It was her pride, her faint-heartedness, that she ought to find fault with, and not her neighbour.

Impressed with a deep sense of her unworthiness, she shut herself into her little room, knelt by the side of her poor couch, and prayed and wept as only those can pray and weep, who have no proper stay but Our Father that is in Heaven. And then, fairly worn out by emotions of many kinds, and want of rest for the last two nights, she fell asleep like a little child and dreamed that she was driving in the grounds of Villa Borghese with her aunt by her side. There were numerous loungers strolling in the gardens; one with his back to her reminded her of Paolo. She knew in

her dream that she had not seen him for very long, and an earnest desire arose in her to tell him how much she had changed, and that she cared no more for those things he cared not for. And presently the gentleman turned, and she saw that it was Paolo, and he had a large rose in his button-hole, and she beckoned to him. He came to her hurriedly, and stretched his hands, holding his beautiful rose, towards her. In her eagerness to grasp it, she leaned far out of the carriage, and felt that she was falling, which she was doing in right earnest. As Paolo, the rose, the gardens disappeared, she found herself lying on the floor by the bed, fortunately without any hurt.

There are moods of the mind which predispose one to receive strong impressions, however unwarranted by reason, from causes almost puerile. Lavinia was in one of these moods, and, silly as it may seem in her, drew so happy an omen from her dream as to amount to a certainty of Paolo's safety. We will not grudge her this superstitious feeling, considering the great comfort she derived from it, and her great need of some comfort.

Renewed trust in God, in the good-will of His creatures, and a strengthened purpose to keep herself, to the best of her powers, in the spirit of one who is sure to be helped, such was the revulsion of feeling with which Lavinia arose from her momentary fit of discouragement. As to the means of earning her bread, she had no choice but to persevere in the old course — applications for the situation of governess and her needle. Answering advertisements, whether in person or by letter, occupied but little of her time; all the rest was devoted to her embroidery. She grew so chary of

every moment, that she grudged herself even the quarter of an hour for her dinner — and such a dinner! If the few sparrows whom she had tamed to come to the window-sill and peck crumbs from her hands, were at all slow in coming to her call, she would chide them for keeping her idle. Yes, even the very poorest have their superfluities. She had her luxury also, something to tend, and watch, and think of, and hope in, and love — a hyacinth growing in its long blue glass. That poor root represented all the external poetry of her life.

To see her pretty lodger slaving from early dawn till late at night, ought to have afforded Mrs. Tamplin an occasion for many a comfortable moan about the misery that always dogged her life; but she neglected this precious opportunity, setting her wits to work instead, to devise some means of forcing Lavinia to enjoy a second's respite; her cunningest trick being reserved for the evening, when, pleading the sad state of her eyes, she would entreat the young lady to read to her from the day's paper the account of the man who smashed a pane of glass that he might obtain a lodging in a prison; or that of the family of four persons who spent most of the night in taking down bills from the walls, and made from the sale of the paper thus obtained as much as sevenpence a day, upon which the four persons contrived to exist.

One day Mrs. Tamplin had an idea — a bright idea. The young lady played on the piano, she believed; could she not give music lessons? Lavinia thought she could, only —

“Wait a moment,” said the widow; “I don’t mean that you should seek to give lessons at the pupils’ own homes. I know very well it would be the old story

over again about references, and good-day to you as the wind-up. Nothing, however, hinders you from opening a class for the piano; very cheap, of course, at the beginning — a class for the piano, here, in this house. I will very willingly let you use the drawing-room for it.”

“Thank you very much, kind Mrs. Tamplin,” said Lavinia. “But to give lessons on the piano, I must first have a piano and —”

“Wait a moment,” interrupted the widow. “I know all you are going to say. There is no occasion to hire a piano before we have secured pupils enough to pay for the hire. Here’s my idea: we’ll put a card in the window, on which we’ll write as clearly as possible: ‘A pianoforte class for young ladies three times a week, by a pupil of —,’ and then the name of whoever was your master; it will sound very well, I daresay. ‘For further particulars, apply within.’ Now, either pupils come or they do not. If enough of them appear, we hire the piano; if no one comes, well and good, then we do not hire the piano, and the class is unavoidably postponed to the first of next month; do you understand now?”

The scheme promised well, in so far that it was feasible and necessitated no outlay on mere chance, and Lavinia eagerly embraced it. A card was written and hung up in the front parlour window; then came the calculations; supposing only six pupils could be got; six pupils at ten shillings a month each — what happiness! Why, after deducting the hire of the instrument — and Mrs. Tamplin was sure one was to be had for sixteen shillings — there would remain forty-

four shillings, and it would be independence, riches. And surely in this interminable Babylon of London it was not very improbable that she might find six pupils, or five, or at the least four.

Alas! days and weeks crawled on, and the card in the window availed nothing. The piano scheme went to pieces. Many persons applied, asked questions, wanted to see the class-room, wanted to see the music mistress's certificates from her master, wanted to hear her play, and were disgusted when they found there was no piano in the house. One volunteered to bring three pupils, provided her own daughter had the benefit of the class gratis, and after the bargain was agreed to, took her leave, and never reappeared. Of all the inquirers one lady alone accepted the terms as they stood. The same unlucky issue attended all Lavinia's personal or written applications for the situation of a governess. Once, only once, since her failure with the lady at Hyde Park Place, had a ray of hope entered her sinking heart. A lady commissioned by one of her friends in the country to look out for a governess, had received the poor girl most courteously; had begged to hear her play on the piano; had expressed warm admiration of her fingering and style of playing, and great gratification at having fallen in with a person so calculated to satisfy her friend; but the moment the question of references was mooted, clouds quickly obliterated the sunshine. Lavinia did not hurry away in despair as in the instance above alluded to; she pleaded her cause earnestly and simply. The lady was touched, went so far as to say that, were she acting for herself, she might perhaps trust to her feelings, and overlook the irregularity of the want of a reference, but acting as she

was for another person, the mother of several young daughters, the thing was impossible.

The little stock of money Lavinia had had about her, when she left Mr. Jones's country seat, was long since exhausted. Of the few costly ornaments, chosen from among the many she owed to the generosity of Mrs. Jones, and which she had felt justified in taking away with her, on account of their particular character of keepsakes, and of their having been intended as such, one, a bracelet, had already been sold, — with what a pang, God knows; the rest must soon follow — and then? what then? For the produce of her indefatigable needle scarcely sufficed for her shoes and washing. Well might the lovely face grow wan, and the youthful figure waste away, as she tried to work out some answer to the terrible question of what was then to become of her.

Mrs. Tamplin, more and more drawn out of her selfishness by the patience of her gentle, uncomplaining lodger, was once more racking her brains for some fresh expedient; and seeking, she found one — and a capital one it was this time. Mr. Duncan, the surgeon, their next-door neighbour, was the person to turn the scales in Lavinia's favour. Mr. Duncan had both the will and the power to do so, at least, so Mrs. Tamplin affirmed. Naturally obliging as he was to every one, she knew he was particularly favourably disposed towards Miss Lavinia; she could see that, by his civility on two or three occasions, and by his having dropped in unprofessionally after the young lady was well again, and by his never meeting her (Mrs. Tamplin) without inquiring for her interesting lodger. As to

friends and interest, few men could equal him. Why not confide in him?

If Mr. Duncan could be induced to recommend Lavinia as a governess or companion — and Mrs. Tamplin was certain that he would do so — and also take upon himself the responsibility of being a reference for her, every difficulty now in her path would vanish like mist before the noonday sun. Was there any objection to Mrs. Tamplin sounding the surgeon? The gentleman, judging from the little Lavinia had seen of him, had in his nature a rich vein of coarseness, which made him unpalatable to one of her refinement and delicacy of feeling; but was she, merely from perhaps dainty squeamishness, to reject the hand, rough indeed, yet perhaps the only hand which could and would rescue her from utter shipwreck? These blunt, rude-spoken men were often the truest and best, she had heard it said; in short, Lavinia ended by accepting this new project with thanks, and Mrs. Tamplin went forth with to open negotiations.

Mr. Duncan fully justified the most sanguine expectations of his melancholy admirer — nothing could surpass his obliging kindness. He called to see Lavinia that evening, and exhaled good-will from every pore.

“And so,” said he, “*we* were at a rather low ebb, were *we*? No occasion to despair. *We* should be afloat again in less than no time. He had set to rights many worse cases than this, eh, Mrs. Tamplin? Stooping over embroidery wouldn’t do, it hurt the chest, it spoilt the shape. Away with it, and with drooping mouths, and faded cheeks. Let roses and lilies and that sort of thing be the order of the day.”

Mrs. Tamplin, good soul, for once chuckled with un-mixed delight, and gave it as her decided opinion, that one might go far, and not find Mr. Duncan's match. Lavinia's conclusions, without going that length, travelled, however, in the same direction. A rugged exterior, but a kindly heart, thought she, and her spirits rose.

Mr Duncan took the habit of frequently dropping in at Mrs. Tamplin's now, and his interest in his fair *protégée* waxed warmer, and more demonstrative at every visit. He began to call her his "little pet," and "still waters," find fault with her pale cheeks and thin wrists, pinching both with much the grace an old bear might display in toying with a rose. Lavinia would willingly have dispensed with these familiarities, indeed, they were positively odious to her; but taking into account the coarse grain of the man, his kindness to her, and his age — young ladies of twenty are apt to look on a green quinquagenarian as upon a Methusalem — she saw in his newly-adopted ways, merely the odd expression of a fatherly interest, and endured them with patience.

One evening Mrs. Tamplin was called out of the sitting-room. Mr. Duncan, who happened to be there, immediately twisted his face into a would-be agreeable, reassuring grin, and said, in a confidential whisper, —

"I have found a first-rate situation for you."

"Have you, indeed? how very kind of you!" cried Lavinia, with a burst of joy and gratitude. "Is it as a governess?"

"Faugh! a governess! Something far better. You come and stay with me."

"With you?" she exclaimed, and her face lengthened.

"Yes, with me; the ill-combed monkey is growing oldish, and wants somebody to look after him and his house; come you, and be my housekeeper; not a bad offer, let me tell you."

Lavinia looked at him in great perplexity, not free from some alarm. Mr. Duncan's countenance was not exactly formed for the display of tender feelings; all his efforts to produce insinuating smiles only gave him a greater resemblance to a mischievous terrier. The astonished girl said at last, —

"But you are a single gentleman, sir."

He laughed his coarsest laugh.

"Yes, thank God, I am — reason the more for you to come; you will have everything your own way, don't you see? — eh? — plenty of the best that's to be got to eat, and to drink — plenty of fine clothes — plenty of money."

Lavinia could bear no more. She jumped up, cast on the grinning knave one look of infinite contempt, and walked away without deigning even a word of rebuke.

"Oh! merciful God, save me from my despair; oh! merciful Lord, take me to Thee."

Such was the agonized cry of the heart-broken girl as she threw herself down — her face on the floor of her bed-room, as if she would bury it for ever from the sight of all mankind. It seemed, indeed, as though the God of the afflicted, the God of the fatherless, had in His mercy listened to her prayer, for all consciousness left her.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Bachelor's Supper, and what came of it.

ABOUT the middle of the month of November, Paolo received intelligence from Rome, of the transfer of Bishop Rodipani's fortune to himself, according to the terms of the will. The solicitor regretted to say that the bishop proved to be less wealthy than had been expected; in fact, that Signor Mancini's legacy would exceed little more than a hundred thousand scudi, half of which, as detailed in the annexed statement, was vested in various foreign stock, realizable at a short notice. Prudent Monsignor Rodipani, in the choice of his investments, had evidently had an eye to the mutability of earthly things. There was, besides the sum of money above mentioned, another of eighteen thousand scudi lying at the bankers, about the disposition of which the solicitor asked for directions.

Paolo very curiously examined the several items of the statement furnished to him, and far from any astonishment or regret at the modicity of his inheritance, he felt a kind of bewilderment at the idea of being so rich. Positively, it was more like a fairy tale than a reality, his being able to fulfil one of the most earnest of his wishes, namely, the securing of the independence and happiness of his two friends, Salvator and Clelia. A really happy morning he spent in writing, first, a very long and affectionate letter to the little painter, then one less long, but not less affectionate, to Clelia, which was enclosed in that to her betrothed, together with a cheque in favour of Salvator for a thousand scudi.

By the same post he wrote to apprise his man of business of what he had done, desiring that henceforth, without any further advice from himself, the sum of sixty scudi should be paid monthly to the person named in the cheque. This done, Paolo went in search of his breakfast, and a hearty meal he made of it; for his satisfaction at the good turn he had been able to do for his friends, was overshadowed by none of the misgivings, as to the source of the wealth of which he disposed — misgivings which had so obstinately haunted him two months ago.

At the Manège he met the Vicomte and Du Genre; they were waiting expressly for him, said M. Du Verlat. One of the *habitués* of the school was on the point of marriage, and according to an established custom, the bridegroom elect was bound to give a *souper de garçons* to the best riders. The choice of the guests had been left to the Vicomte, in his capacity of honorary president, and Paolo naturally had a right to a high place on his list. It would have been difficult, even for one inclined to do so, to decline an invitation so flatteringly and so courteously given; but Paolo, in his present mood, was not likely to run the risk of disobliging any one of his acquaintances; so he accepted the compliment paid to himself and his equestrian powers, with thanks. M. Du Verlat looked much pleased as he said, —

“We are to meet at twelve to-night at Barruel’s. You know where I mean; if not, Péliissier is of the party, and will show you the way. Adieu, till then, and remember there is no need to dress.”

“A few hours of *ennui*,” thought Paolo to himself, as, on the stroke of midnight, he walked, arm-in-arm

with Du Genre, to the place of rendezvous — at most a few hours of *ennui* — to listen to how some lucky speculator won a fortune within an hour by the *hausse* or the *baisse*, or to hear the apotheosis of the legs of La Petra Camara. Other danger or dangers he could not see, unless indeed from the bottle; and against that he felt fully armed. Of the possibility of there being ladies among the guests, he never once thought, or his natural shyness would have been on the *qui vive* at once. A bachelor's supper, as he in his innocence understood it, meant a supper of men in the blessed state of celibacy, to the entire exclusion of the other sex. Fancy then his consternation when, on being ushered into the *sancta sanctorum*, he confronted a bevy of ladies — he could have sworn to there being fifty of them, though, in fact, there were only eight, the same number as of gentlemen. Paolo's first instinctive movement was to draw back, but this probability had to all appearance been foreseen, and provided against by Du Genre, who gave his friend a gentle push forward, and a gentle warning not to make a fool of himself. The consciousness which now dawned upon Paolo, of having been intentionally decoyed into a trap, gave him a finishing stroke — his heart thumped, his ears tingled, his head swam. All this was the affair of a few seconds.

"Mdle. Celina," called the vicomte, as he hastened towards the Italian, and took him courteously by the hand. A graceful, impish figure sprang to her feet at this summons, fluttered across the room on the points of her toes, came to a full stop, and suddenly describing a parabola in the air, alighted on her right foot, with the whiz of a bomb, between Paolo and Du Verlat.

"Mdlle. Celina, of the opera ballet corps," explained the vicomte. "Mademoiselle is all impatience to make your acquaintance, Mr. Mancini, and to hear of the wonders of Rome. I confide her to your gallantry as your partner for the evening, or rather for the night. I leave you to each other."

While the introduction was taking place, Mdlle. Celina slowly waved herself about, crossed her arms upon her bosom, and curtsied in full choreographic style. She was in the costume of her calling, bare neck, bare arms, plentifully rouged, with a fabulous circumvallation of white muslin around her. She might have figured to advantage in a picture of the temptations of St. Anthony. Her well-cut eyes, and cherry-round lips — the only beauty about her, except her youth — were as saucy and provoking as any of Propertius' odes. A girl hardly past sixteen, with the figure and manner of that age, hers were the set features, the assurance, the knowing look of a coquette of thirty. Little fit to observe, and to reason out his observations as Paolo was at this moment, he felt intuitively this glaring want of harmony, and was repelled by it. An old soul in a young body, as he defined her afterwards.

Dropping all that was professional for the nonce, Paolo's partner for the night passed her arm within his, and said abruptly, —

"Art thou a prince, a marquis, or what?"

Rather wincing under the infliction of the quaker-like form of address, he replied that he had no title at all.

"Not a little bit? what a pity; particularly for

a *joli garçon*. I doat on titles. I will dub thee chevalier."

"I beg you will commit no such folly," said Paolo.

"Papa vicomte," called out the miss, "fine my partner; he has called me *you*."

A general burst of laughter welcomed the accusation. Every eye brought itself to bear on the Italian.

"Pardon him for this once," said Du Verlat; "besides, we are not yet at table."

If what he had already seen and heard by this time had not revealed to Paolo the nature and the purpose of the surprise prepared for him by his friends, a very little further observation of what was said and done, soon fully opened his eyes. The curious, though carefully guarded attention, of which he was the object, marked him out plainly enough for the hero of the *fête*, and what the nature of the *fête* was to be, was as clearly intimated by the look of the *lionnes* convened — the look of Bacchantes in repose, ready to rush forth in their real character at the first call of the *system*. A few months ago, when he was a thorough savage, neither stratagem nor force would have kept him from breaking loose, and, come what might, quitting the company; now, that he was half civilized, the fear of ridicule was a potent spell, and rooted him there. Yet to breathe that stifling atmosphere, to face for any length of time that odious little imp by his side, to sit a witness, if not an actor, in the revel — all this he felt to be a moral impossibility.

An irruption of waiters with trays, and the bustle that followed, aroused him from his brown study. He

did what he saw the others do — led his allotted partner to a seat, sat himself down beside her, and —

Don't shut the book, fair reader, in fearful expectation of our being about to shock your feelings. If anything improper took place at the convivial board, neither Paolo nor the muse of his historiographer — a teetotaller muse, by the way, and one who wears high dresses — know anything of it. For no sooner had Paolo dropped into his chair, than he had an inspiration — yes, a positive inspiration as to how effectually to isolate himself from his surroundings. He deliberately gulped down a glass of Madeira, then a second, a third, and a fourth, and being little used to libations, was out of harm's way, that is, dead drunk, before the initiatory oysters were disposed of; and had to be removed from the room, conveyed to his entresol, consigned to his bed, and left to the care of his portress. A headache of three days' duration, and, if possible, a greater horror than ever of that particular kind of orgies, into which he had been entrapped — such were for Paolo the immediate results of his having made one at the bachelor's supper. It was, unluckily, destined to have some further consequences.

Pique and champagne are dangerous counsellors. Mdlle. Celina, of the opera ballet corps, was brimful, at all events, of the first, and must, and would have her revenge. In what had Paolo offended her? Paolo had done more than spurn, revile, trample her under foot; blessed with the promise of her society, he had, to get quit of her, wilfully parted with his own reason, making her thus a butt for the quizzing of the whole party. There was no room for the shadow of a doubt; for Du Genre, who saw no cause why he should keep

his convictions secret, frankly declared his belief that Paolo's intoxication was an intentional, predetermined act. His sober, nay abstemious habits, together with the fulminating character of the drunken fit, left room for no other explanation.

And so it came to pass that the spiteful little imp hatched a plot against the poor absent youth, and then and there chalked it out before her wine-heated compeers — amid frantic acclamations and promises of unconditional support, more especially from Du Genre, whose patronage was regarded as peculiarly necessary to the success of the scheme.

Du Genre, and most likely the other men, had forgotten all about Mdlle. Celina and her projects by the morrow, but Mdlle. Celina had an excellent memory. A few days after, in fact, when her preparations for action were complete, the piquant young lady, with the well-cut eyes, and cherry-round lips, paid Du Genre an unexpected visit; she came to summon him to redeem the pledge of assistance he had given. Du Genre would rather that his pretty friend had not asked this, but he did not dare to withdraw from his engagement. He had promised — he well recollected having done so — and must abide by his word. Men have sometimes odd notions of duty. I have known some who never paid their tailor's bill, hold a gambling debt sacred, and starve themselves to meet it. On the other hand, Du Genre reflected that, after all, little was asked of him — very little — merely to furnish a few indications of Paolo's where-abouts and habits, and he gave them. Paolo greatly frequented the Boulevard des Italiens, drove or rode almost daily to the Bois de Boulogne, and had just taken the stall No. 22 at the "Italiens"

for the season. After all, philosophized the Frenchman, since Telemachus must needs go through his apprenticeship and pay for it sooner or later — as well with a Mdle. Clarisse as with any other.

Mademoiselle Clarisse, the intimate friend of Miss Celina, and who was to act for the latter in this affair, was a *lionne* of some renown. She had walked the boards professionally, and could personate all characters to the life, both on and off the stage, but her triumph was in that of the *Ingenue*. Sentiment was her *forte*: to see her gaze pensively before her, as she would often do for mere frolic, her head slightly bent forward, her chin reclining on the palm of her hand, her cheek against her stretched-out forefinger, was to see the image of an Ophelia. Nature had blundered in Mademoiselle Clarisse; given the outward distinction, the reserve, the dignity of a Lucretia, to a humbug.

A few evenings later, Paolo was in his stall at the "Italiens." The *Sonnambula* was the opera; he knew it by heart, and yet he was all eyes and ears. Who can ever have enough of the *Sonnambula*? Everything about it — the story, music, and feelings — so simple, so true, so fresh. Paolo's soul swam in a bath of delight. At the end of "*Cari luoghi*," a few exclamations of unmitigated enthusiasm drew his attention from the stage to those about him; on his right sat a lady of the age of chaperones, and by her one of the chaperoned, both of whom, but especially the younger, seemed to enjoy the performance keenly. The latter had positively big tears in her lovely eyes. Paolo was charmed to see his own emotion shared by others, and naturally felt an interest in those doing so. The ladies were richly but simply and soberly dressed; the fea-

tures of the elder one were rather commonplace; those of the younger, fine, noble, even haughty, had they not been softened by her present emotion. Her pure white complexion, hazel eyes, and acorn-hued hair, gave to her beauty that subdued and mellow tone, so dear to poetic dreamers; rather suggestive of violets and moonlight, than of sunshine and roses. Paolo could discern about her eyes and temples traces of early suffering; or, of late hours and hard libations, as the case might be. But he only thought of the former.

Occasional remarks were interchanged between him and the elderly lady, his immediate neighbour, but the younger did not join in the conversation, though her eyes and his met often in sympathetic communion. She addressed him once though, and in this way: He overheard her whisper to her *chaperone* that *he* must be an Italian. Paolo looked at her, and smiled assent, when she suddenly leaned forwards, seemingly incapable of controlling the impulse, saying to him, —

“I was certain of it, only an Italian can feel this music as you do.”

Then she blushed scarlet, and said no more for the evening.

When Mario sang *Il piu tristo dei mortali*, the sentimental lady fairly gave way and sobbed aloud; she knew it was very foolish, but she could not help it. It was all Paolo could do not to follow her example. The curtain fell, too soon for Paolo's pleasure; the ladies withdrew, not without a gentle inclination of the head to the stranger, who bowed low and even sighed, as the lovely vision disappeared. How long it was, since he had sat at such a feast! Here was a woman worth knowing and caring for! What a soul she had! Ten

to one he should never meet her again in this Babylon of Paris; though, perhaps, they might come again to hear Bellini's masterpiece. Whether they did or not, a sweet recollection was his, nobody could rob him of that; and his thoughts rested long and fondly on the fresh oasis he had discovered.

Apparently it was written somewhere, that he should have something more substantial than recollection to feed upon. The next day but one — what a piece of luck! — he met her most unexpectedly in the Bois de Boulogne. She was in an open carriage — the weather being uncommonly fine and mild for the season — looking passively before her, her head slightly bent forwards, in short, in the *pose* that we already know of. Du Genre's tilbury and her *coupé* brushed past each other; the hazel eyes met the black eyes. Paolo blushed and bowed.

"Heyday," cried Du Genre; "it seems that we have been making fine acquaintances."

Paolo, who had kept his adventure to himself, now made a clean breast of it, and did so with a warmth of tone and feeling, which gave the Frenchman quite a qualm of conscience. He pursed up his lips, and answered, —

"As a general rule, never take the measure of a woman's sensibility from the tears she may shed in public. Some women look beautiful in tears, and they know it."

"Nonsense; hers gushed from her very soul," averred the enthusiast.

"Are you sure she has such a thing as that? Plato denied souls to women."

"Then Plato was a fool; and you have a perverse pre-determination to depreciate all that is exalted."

"Holy patience!" cried Du Genre. "I disclaim any blacker purpose than to put you on your guard."

"This is, indeed, quite a new sort of mission you have undertaken; hitherto, you have rather endeavoured to throw me off my guard."

"True enough," said Du Genre; "but then, it was with a view to something defined — it is the vague, the unknown, that scares me for you."

A little opposition was just the ingredient wanting to give zest to the pursuit. Du Genre's disparaging hints had no other effect than that of raising the owner of the hazel eyes. That a materialist of Du Genre's calibre, should misjudge, nay feel an instinctive antipathy to her, where could be a clearer proof of her superior nature?

Paolo returned to the Bois on horseback — alone; gazed at her, raised his hat, sighed, but kept at a respectful distance. Encouragement came in the shape of an embroidered handkerchief, inadvertently dropped; he dismounted, picked it up, returned it to the fair owner, and withdrew. This was provoking discretion on his part — the fine weather could not last for ever. On the morrow, the fairy was suddenly seized by an immoderate wish for a walk in a solitary alley — by a strange coincidence Mr. Mancini happened to be passing at the moment, he stopped irresolute — a smile and a glance invited him to dare. He alighted, tied his horse to a tree, and joined the lady with such a beating heart. She did not look offended, thank God — spoke of the charms of solitude — there was nothing like nature. Could he sketch or paint? A little; he said, but not

landscape. Was he acquainted with Troyon's pictures? they were so beautiful, so real — she possessed two of them. Did she really? he should so much like to see them. No; would he? as a rule she received no company — hers was a life of retirement; but for once she would make an exception. Her address was 101, Rue Breda, if he dropped in some day after one o'clock, he should be shown her two gems.

He went, and was ushered by a man in livery into a small but gorgeously fitted apartment — soft carpets, and endless mirrors. Madame received him in her boudoir — in her pensive *pose*. How stupid of her to have forgotten that she had sent her Troyons to have new frames. He had actually come for nothing. For nothing! when he enjoyed the blessing of her presence. Time flew on its swiftest pinions in her society. She was full of enthusiasm about all that was grand and noble, Italy, of course, included. She was a widow, had had her affections horribly trifled with — believed men to be invariably false and fickle. Such was the precious information gathered on his first visit.

A second and a third followed — then came a full stop. Madame de Saint Victor was not at home; was not to be met at the Bois — the weather had veered to rain and mud — nor yet was she to be seen at the Italian Opera. Poor Paolo was a living image of disappointment. What could be the meaning of this eclipse of his sun? The explanation was vouchsafed in the following note left with her porter one morning.

“DEAR SIR, —

“Pray, do not call any more. My door is shut against you by *my* orders. To no living man but your-

self, would I condescend to account for any of my actions. I am sure you will feel for me, and not misunderstand me, when I say that the course I have adopted is the only one consistent with my future peace. I have been too cruelly wrecked on the sea of passion to venture on it again. Do not think me bold when I am only frank. I wish to see you *once* more — when and where I have not yet decided; but not here, in my own house. Farewell till then.

“C. de S. V.”

Every syllable of this rigmarole, down to the very dashes, and pallid-hued sealing wax, wrought the young recipient up to white heat. Paolo took to staying much at home, he expected a second note, which would fix the time and place of the heavenly *last* interview, and was in mortal fear lest it might reach him too late to allow of his obeying the summons. Paolo's fancy at its utmost stretch did not go beyond a letter.

One morning he was poring over a letter just received from Rome, in which his man of business informed him that no cheque for a thousand scudi had been presented by Signor Angelo Gigli, and that he had moreover ascertained, that that person was no longer in Rome — his present abode no one knew. Where the deuce can Salvator be? was Paolo thinking to himself, when a great pull at the bell startled him. He went to open the door and lo! there *she* was. His heart alone told him it was her, for the thick folds of her black veil quite concealed her features. She walked past him into the salon, there with trembling hands raised her veil, and showed him the adored face, ashy white with emotion.

"Oh! what have I done! What must you think of me!" and with this cry of despair, she threw herself on the sofa in an agony of tears. Paolo dropped on one knee, and wiped away her tears with his lips. Celina was revenged.

The Boulevard knew Paolo no more for the next ten days. Vague reports to the effect that he had been met with at Fontainebleau, and at St. Germain accompanied by a lady, reached Du Genre, who, pushing his inquiries further, learned that his Roman friend had hired a small *pied-à-terre* in the Avenue Montaigne, together with a carriage and men-servants. Du Genre felt uneasy, and grew still more so, when unexpectedly called upon by the Italian, at the request he received, and the excited manner in which it was made. Paolo wanted five thousand francs within three hours. Du Genre had not the sum himself, but hoped he could manage to find it — at the same time, he could not help hinting at the danger of raising money. Paolo winced and said bitterly, he rather expected to have been congratulated than remonstrated with. Was he not making a fool of himself, just what his friends had wished him to do from the first. Du Genre's conscience smote him, and in his heart he wished Miss Celina at the devil. He would willingly have made a full confession, but he saw that Paolo was in no state to listen to anything like reason — and then — to what purpose now. The evil was done, and could not be undone.

The required money was had, but not without difficulty. Paolo gave his note of hand for the sum at a month's date, six per cent. interest being guaranteed per month. The five thousand francs were equally

divided between Miss Celina and Clarisse. There's nothing like honesty in trade.

We have at least this consoling intelligence from Paolo's own lips, that he knew he was making a fool of himself; let us add for our own satisfaction that three weeks had not gone by, before he also knew that he was being made a fool of by quondam Mdlle. Clarisse. She was not the woman long to play an uncongenial part to please anybody, and her inherent tastes for champagne, extravagant dress, and bank notes asserted their existence little by little, and then blazed forth the more vigorously for their momentary repression. In short, Paolo saw much, endured much that jarred with his nature, endured it, partly from timidity and a scarcely conscious desire not to write himself down an ass so soon, partly also from the base spell which held him captive. But endurance has limits even for a man — bewitched. Among the host of male and female cousins, with whom she had made him acquainted, there was a young scapegrace, particularly offensive to him on account of his coarse manners, and unbecoming tone of familiarity with her. Paolo asked Mdlle. Clarisse one day to forbid this fellow's visits, and received a flat refusal. Paolo insisted and said she *must*. To hear her laughter at this! She improved the occasion to let him hear a bit of her mind. To oblige a dear friend, she had condescended to act a little comedy with Signor Mancini, she said; but not for twenty, such as he was, would she give up her *Desiré* — the cousin on whom she doated.

Paolo was confounded by her cynicism, at the parade she made of her own deceit, at the naïve pride she evinced in her own infamy. He left her to see her

no more. But thoroughly as he despised her, he despised himself still more — for missing her as he did. Yes, he missed her — or rather missed the excitement that followed in her footsteps. Not knowing how to fill up the vacuum she had left in his life, he took to haunting the public balls — the carnival was just then at its height. A very handsome man such as he was, and known in certain quarters to be rich and generous, Paolo was offered consolation, and accepted it, accepted it without illusion, and for what it was worth.

Let us turn aside from viewing him wallowing in this mire. Who knows but that from his own debasement, he may leave a lesson of forbearance for the weaknesses of others!

CHAPTER XV.

A Plank of Safety.

BROUGHT back to consciousness and helped to her bed by the affrighted widow, who, on learning the cause of the young lady's distraction, kept on assuring her that Dr. Duncan could not have meant what she suspected him of, and that it was all a mistake which would be cleared up on the morrow, — Lavinia at last found relief in tears; and after indulging in a hearty fit of crying, she recovered something like composure and begged to be left alone — to sleep. Not that she entertained the least hope of sleeping, but she had reached that stage of wretchedness, at which even sympathy becomes importunate, and complete solitude is the only boon craved for.

In this desolate mood she turned her misery round

and round, looking at it from every side, and mused and mused upon it till her head grew quite bewildered, and her thoughts ungovernable; and feeling greatly afraid of her own excitement, she bethought herself of the Word which never fails to calm, and soothe, and comfort. She took up a New Testament lying on her dressing-table — a gift from Lady Augusta's mother — it opened of itself at these words: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find *rest unto* your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

She read long, and as she read the whiz and buzz in her brain subsided, a sense of repose stole alike over soul and body. Hoping to be able to sleep now, she put down the book, and in so doing caused a slip of paper to drop from it on the floor. She took it up, it was a card, on the back of which were written in pencil these words: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The quotation was in the large bold angular handwriting of Lady Augusta's mother. On the other side of the card was engraved in minute characters — "Countess Willingford." The merciful sentence endorsed as it were by the countess, struck Lavinia as a prompting from heaven. The very voice of Lady Augusta's mother seemed to call to her and say, "Ask and it shall be given you." Why had Lavinia not asked of her old friend? It would have been so natural to have done so from the very beginning of her troubles. Had it been some lurking pride, which had held her back? If so, reason the more to humble herself now.

Lavinia rose from her bed, and wrote a long letter to the countess, describing all her attempts and failures; the utter sinking of her heart but a few hours ago; and related the circumstance under which her hopes and her confidence in her, whom she was now addressing, had revived; freely accused herself of ingratitude, and begged to be pardoned; acknowledged her readiness to accept of even the humblest situation, and the impossibility in which she stood of procuring any, unless a word from one so high in station as her ladyship, came to the assistance of her own efforts. This and much more that we leave out, Lavinia wrote, signing herself Lavinia Holywell. This outpouring of pent-up feelings lightened the heavily-burdened young heart; she slept a sound refreshing sleep, and rose next morning with renewed elasticity of spirit and body. Her first act was to drop her letter into the box of the nearest post-office.

At nearly four o'clock of the same day, a hackney coach stopped opposite Mrs. Tamplin's, and a tall lady, whose age and countenance were concealed by a thick veil, stepping out of it, knocked at the door, and in a clear voice asked for Miss Holywell. At the sound of the well-known tones, Lavinia rushed from her room to meet the visitor, and —

Let it be understood that Lady Willingford had started on her present mission, very much in the mood of an old diplomatist going to take a part at a congress; namely, in a spirit full of reservation on many a point. The mystery she had made of Lavinia's letter to her daughter, the hired coach, the rather shabby attire, and the closely-drawn down veil, were all so many guarantees to herself of a pre-determination to keep strictly within certain limits braced by prudence — to

go so far, and no farther. But at sight of the sweet pale face — oh! how much changed since last seen — at the sound of sobs which involuntarily broke from the stooping form — at the feeling of the hot tears on her hands, the woman swallowed up the countess; and raising the humbly bent face to her own, she pressed the poor girl to her heaving bosom with a tenderness which, had Lavinia been the daughter of the mightiest duke in Great Britain, instead of the friendless orphan she was, would certainly not have been warmer or more sincere.

"Here I am, your old friend! Let us have done with tears," said her ladyship, her own voice choked by emotion.

"It is not grief," sobbed the girl, smiling amid her tears.

"What you must have gone through, my poor child," said the countess, taking a long look at Lavinia's haggard countenance. "Augusta and I have been really alarmed by your obstinate silence. Every day for these last three months have we been expecting and hoping to hear again from you. My dear, why did you not write?"

"I was wrong, very wrong," and again Lavinia's tears began to flow.

"Come, come, I do not mean to scold you."

"Oh yes, do scold me, pray do. It was so ungrateful, so heartless of me; I deserve that you should be angry."

"Well, if it will be any comfort to you," said the countess smiling, "I shall call you a very naughty child," and a hearty kiss softened this not very sharp rebuke.

"And now that my scolding is over," continued Lady Willingford, whose own usual composure had by this time returned, "let me praise you for the care you took to spare Augusta's feelings; it was so sensible, so considerate in you to write to me and not to her. Charming as your letter is, there is much in it that might have pained one of her quick sensibility; that is the reason why I have kept it from her for the present: you must not consider it as an unkindness."

"Oh! Lady Willingford, could I ever think you unkind? No, indeed; whatever you decide to be best for me, I shall believe to be best."

"Thank you, my dear," said the countess, much pleased, "however, do not imagine that I purpose long to deprive her of the good news that our Lavinia is found — only for a few days — until I see my way as to how I can best be of use to you. To speak frankly, I rather fear being hampered by Augusta in my measures, she is so hasty and vehement. Of course, I expect and wish you both to meet — how glad she will be to see you — previous to your leaving London, as you say you wish to do. We shall discuss this plan of yours by-and-by, but first will you not give me your entire confidence that I may be able fairly to judge whether there is no choice for you, except this extreme one of being either a governess or companion?"

Lavinia was quite ready to confide in Lady Willingford. Not a single particular of the sad narrative related by Mr. Jones was withheld from the eager listener, who now learned how the real Lavinia Jones had died when a baby, how, in a sordid view of gain, the little Lavinia Holywell had been substituted in the deceased infant's place; and how, to ease her conscience,

one of the accomplices in the fraud, Lavinia's mother, had sent for Mr. Jones and made a full confession to him. Nor was the squalor of the dying woman's condition, nor the fact of her being unmarried, passed over in silence, but simply and unhesitatingly stated.

Peremptorily as all this established the absence of any relationship between Lavinia and Mr. Jones, it still left unaccounted for and unjustified the extreme step she had taken in breaking off all intercourse with him. Pressed on this point, Lavinia said for all answer, —

"Indeed, I had no alternative but to do so."

The countess must have had in her disposition some of her daughter's impetuosity, so emphatically did she exclaim, —

"The villain!"

"He wanted me to marry him," added Lavinia, who saw the expediency of correcting the erroneous impression she had given.

"Oh! the old wretch," said her ladyship, by way of variation.

The ground was now clear for taking into consideration Lavinia's future prospects. They afforded indeed little room for discussion; the necessity of some situation, which should assure Lavinia the means of existence, and the desirableness of finding such a one in the country, where there would be less risk for her of disagreeable meetings, stared her ladyship in the face. She accordingly promised to set about this search immediately, and bade her *protégée* be of good cheer. The countess had too much good sense and good feeling, and was, besides, too deeply impressed by the girl's gentle dignity, to venture on any offer which would have made Lavinia dependent on her bounty.

"We shall find some snug home for you after all, where you may enjoy comfort, even happiness," said Lady Willingford. "Station and riches, believe me," and here came a sigh, "do not always secure either; it is the spirit in which we accept our lot, great or humble, which renders it a happy or unhappy one."

The parting was as affectionate as the meeting had been. Patroness and patronized might have been easily mistaken for mother and daughter, so tender was the former, so dutiful and confiding the latter.

Kind and encouraging notes, and little presents, after this red-letter day, began to pour in on the young recluse of Camden Town. Those best know the value of these priceless nothings, who have been long sequestered from all interchange of the small coin of courtesies. Be it only a bunch of violets, or an inquiry left with a card at your door, how sweet the assurance thus implied that you are something to somebody! The countess herself came now and then. Doubly lucky was it for Lavinia to have this fresh supply of sympathy from abroad, for scanty indeed was that she met just now at home.

Mrs. Tamplin's milk of human kindness, we are very sorry to say, had waxed rather sour ever since the impeachment of her matchless surgeon. Mr. Duncan was the widow's last illusion, the only sunny spot in her mental perspective, and no wonder she clung to him with the tenacity of despair. His right to be heard and explain, which she was sure he could do most satisfactorily, was as clear in the eyes of the landlady as was in those of her lodger the utter uselessness, nay, the positive degradation, of anything like an argument with a man who had so indubitably insulted her. This

contrary point of view, in spite of all Lavinia's efforts to divest her opposition of any asperity, could not but create between the two parties concerned a little jarring, which the jealousy fermenting in Mrs. Tamplin's breast all this while did not tend to allay. How could she, who had hitherto played the first part, not wince at being reduced to the second?

Happily, this disagreeable state of affairs was not to be of long continuance. When the powerful of this world set their hearts on anything, it is rare but that the realization should quickly follow the wish. Serviceableness is certainly a virtue far from uncommon, but never so effectually exercised as when they who draw bills upon it can be drawn upon in their turn. A fortnight had scarcely elapsed from the day of the countess's first visit to Lavinia, when a little note came to announce that the much-desired situation was found. Lady Willingford put off all particulars till the morrow, when she would call as early as eleven in the forenoon, and Lavinia was desired to have her trunk packed, and to be ready to accompany her friend — whither? The note did not explain; probably to her new home; at least our heroine argued as much from the circumstance of being told that she was to be prepared to leave her lodging.

She did not take long to pack. Her wardrobe had dwindled to the smallest compass, and she might have said, with the ancient philosopher: "I have all my belongings about me." The whole of this, her last day under Mrs. Tamplin's roof, Lavinia spent in propitiating that worthy matron, but for whose kindly advice, and help, and motherly care, the grateful girl protested she knew not indeed what might have become of her. Low-

spirited Mrs. Tamplin, who had no heart of stone, was quickly mollified, and ended by forgetting her grievance as to the charge against matchless Mr. Duncan. And when Lavinia pressed her to accept a simple ring, which she begged Mrs. Tamplin to wear in remembrance of the good she had done to a poor friendless orphan girl, the widow was fairly conquered, and the two amicably mingled their tears; that great luxury of rich and poor alike.

By ten minutes past eleven the next morning, Lavinia was driving with Lady Willingford to the station, from whence they were to go by railway to her ladyship's country seat near Southampton, where Lady Augusta was impatiently waiting for them. Fancy our dear girl's agreeable surprise at this prospect, when she had been thinking she was to go directly to the family who had engaged her! On the contrary, it had been arranged that she was to spend three days with the countess and Lady Augusta, and to start on the fourth to join Mrs. Ennerly, the lady whose companion she was to be. Mrs. Ennerly was just now, and would be till after Christmas, at her country house, near Moreton in Dorsetshire, and she had desired that Miss Holywell should come to her there; but Weymouth might more probably be considered Lavinia's ultimate destination, as it was in that watering-place that Mrs. Ennerly resided the chief part of the year. She was a person of good family and fortune, and, Lady Willingford had been assured on all sides, also of very kindly disposition and not difficult to please. She was passionately fond of poetry and music; and reading aloud, and playing and singing would be the principal duties exacted from her companion. Fifty pounds a year was

the salary agreed on, considered as a tolerably fair remuneration out of London. Altogether, the countess hoped that the situation was one to suit her young friend; if not, Lavinia had only a word to say, and another should be sought out for her. Lady Willingford also exacted a promise, that no notions of false delicacy should prevent her young friend from frankly confessing if she were uncomfortable. Lavinia must learn to trust her friends. Lavinia gave the required promise, fervently kissing the white hand held up in playful menace, and said simply, —

“God bless you, Lady Willingford!” words spoken in a way that made the object of that blessing feel really blessed.

If we were to say that Lady Willingford did not feel a little nervous on reaching the station, and that the five minutes she had to spend in the waiting-room did not seem very long to her, we should say that which is untrue. It was only too probable, well known as she was on the road they were about to travel, that she might meet some one she knew, and be asked questions inconvenient to answer, as to her lovely companion. However, the train departed, and in due time deposited the travellers safely at Southampton, without her ladyship’s incognito having been once endangered.

Though the beginning of December, the weather was uncommonly clear and fine, and the forty minutes’ drive from Southampton to Willingford Castle was more keenly enjoyed by Lavinia than any drive she had ever taken. After long seclusion in dreary, foggy London, every picturesque spot, every patch of green, every glossy-leaved holly, were welcomed by her as old friends lost and found again. But how her heart fluttered, and

how dim grew her sparkling eyes, when they caught sight, far up the long avenue of stately oaks, of a lovely, familiar figure tripping quickly towards them! The carriage stopped at the sound of a sweet voice, calling to her joyously by name; she jumped out to find herself clasped in the arms of her dear faithful friend, Lady Augusta.

Let us be as discreet as the countess, and leave the young people to an uninterrupted three days' *tête-à-tête*. Lavinia had, as we know, plenty to relate, and it is easy to fancy the one rehearsing the eventful history of the period of their separation, the other building castles for the future. We all live chiefly on memory and hope; the present, a fugitive point no sooner possessed than gone, occupies but little room in the flying mirage of life. On this we may rely, that amid the evocations of the past, the days at Rome, and true-hearted Domenichino, were not forgotten on one side, as was not, on the other, among the anticipations of the future, the hope of a speedy and long reunion at Weymouth. Weymouth would be a far more agreeable place to go to than Brighton.

Perhaps Lavinia might have been inclined to shake her head a little disconsolately at this anticipation; perhaps she might even have spoken out some of her fears; but at sight of a sweet mouth beginning to droop, kept her wisdom to herself, and even paraded a confidence as to their meeting, which she did not feel. What was the use, in fact, of throwing cold water on illusions originating in the warmest affections? Surely enough, the realities of life would assert themselves in due time, and dispel all such fond dreams.

Lady Augusta's preoccupations at to the future,

however, did not blind her to some of the urgent necessities of the present. She had detected at a glance, insufficiencies in her friend's wardrobe, glaring enough indeed to attract the notice of less friendly eyes, and immediately set to work to supply what was wanted with what she had best of her own. With so much delicacy was this done, that not even the most irritable susceptibility could have been wounded. Lady Augusta must have Lavinia dressed like herself, as they used often to be in former days, and under this pretext a black dress and cloak were procured from Southampton. Lavinia must have furs like Lady Augusta.

"And now," said her young ladyship, "if you don't captivate Mrs. Ennerly, she must have the heart of the dragon that attacked Andromeda; though, after all," she added, fondly, "you would look charming with a brass pan on your head; unlike some other people, not a hundred miles away, who require fine feathers to be fine birds."

How could Lavinia have refused any gifts so offered? She was almost as happy to receive as Lady Augusta to give.

Longer than a three days' meeting comes to a close. Early on the fourth morning since her arrival at the castle, mother and daughter accompanied Lavinia to the Southampton station. Sad and silent was the drive, sad and silent the ten minutes spent at the terminus. The countess placed in Lavinia's hand a handsomely embroidered purse, and said hurriedly, —

"Keep it in remembrance of me; it is my own work, and I had meant it for Augusta; I know it will be doubly precious to you on that account. There is a little money in it, which you must not refuse, as it

will make my mind easy about you. I am only treating you as I would my daughter; it is requisite always in travelling to be prepared for unforeseen contingencies.

Lavinia took the purse, kissed it, and the hand which bestowed it, but did not venture to speak.

By this time the warning bell rang. The two girls fell into each other's arms, holding one another in a long, long embrace.

"Oh! must it be really so?" cried Lady Augusta, with an appealing glance at her mother.

"It must," said Lavinia, firmly, "because it is plainly the will of God. He knows best, who cast my lot among the lowly; and my clear duty is to accept my portion humbly and cheerfully; help me to do so, dearest. God bless you, Lady Willingford! God bless you, my own darling!" And Lavinia was hurried from the platform into a carriage.

Oh, fatal platform! how many dramas, not the less heart-rending for being compressed into a few minutes, have you not seen!

CHAPTER XVI.

The Rose Unique.

LAVINIA, as she took her seat in the carriage, let down her veil, and — We have had so much of the melting mood in our last chapter, that we dare not say what she did. After all, it is not our fault if, dealing as we do with the realities of life, we stumble oftener on tears than on smiles. It is not, we should say, without good reason that the world has been styled "a valley of tears."

Whatever Lavinia's occupation on first entering the carriage, she was soon roused from it by the novelty and responsibility of her situation. The mere fact of finding herself travelling alone amid strangers, on her way to an unknown place, a fact unprecedented in her life, was sufficient to inspire her with some vague uneasiness, and keep her nervously awake to the present, without taking into account the incubus of her luggage to look after, and the dread of passing Wareham; the station at which, being bound for Moreton, she had been told she would have to change carriages. Suppose she were to be carried on, and find herself at Exeter, what would become of her! Such preoccupations, ridiculous as they may seem to practised travellers, did not weigh the less heavily on the mind of one so thoroughly unpractised and unpractical — and how could she be otherwise — as our poor heroine?

However, all went smooth with her; when Wareham was reached, passengers for Moreton were warned audibly enough, God knows, to alight; and she had the further satisfaction of seeing her trunk safely deposited in the luggage van of the train for Moreton. Much eased in her mind, Lavinia had leisure to feel hungry; she ventured into the refreshment room, and bought some buns, and, searching out an empty carriage, got in, ensconced herself in a corner seat, and amused herself with watching the coming and going of passengers.

One in particular attracted her notice, a lady of middle height, who was carrying a flower-pot large enough to require her to use both hands. Had it been a baby, the lady could not have hugged her burden

more carefully and tenderly against her bosom. The railway porters vied with each other as to who should free her of her flower-pot; but she defended it against all officious offers, with as much determination as graciousness. There is no surer conductor of sympathy between gentle natures, than the care bestowed upon gentle and delicate things, be they even inanimate. Lavinia felt an interest in this lady, and followed her movements with kindly curiosity. She saw her stand still to speak to one of the officials, and for an instant obliged to take her right hand from her charge, in order to receive a newspaper this person presented to her; he, standing all the while with uncovered head, in spite of her signing to him repeatedly to put on his cap. "A lady of consequence, unassuming withal and most good-natured," thought Lavinia, as the object of her survey was moving forward in quest of a carriage. "How I wish she would come in here!" The wish was scarcely formed before it was gratified. The stranger installed herself in the corner opposite to Lavinia.

"Is it not beautiful? a real rose unique," said the new comer, in answer to the glance of admiration cast on her roses by her *vis-à-vis*; "they smell so sweet too," and saying this, she held them towards Lavinia.

"Thank you — they are delicious," said Lavinia, burying her face in them; "they are doubly beautiful so late in the year."

"Yes, I managed to preserve them in bloom, by keeping them in the greenhouse," added the lady, placing the flowers on the bottom of the carriage in order to be at liberty to unfold *The Times*. She turned the enormous paper over and over, evidently in search

of something special, which having found, she began earnestly to read. Her attention, however, was speedily diverted from her perusal, for, the train being now in motion, the flower-pot danced about most ominously. She tried first to steady it by the help of her feet, then put it on the seat by her, then finally took it in her lap; but this last device interfered terribly with her reading: the unruly flower-pot requiring one hand to make it maintain its perpendicular, the other proved sadly insufficient to manage the huge printed sheet. Seeing this, Lavinia begged that the care of the rose might be confided to her; a proposal which was naturally objected to on the plea of the trouble it would give, but Lavinia assured her it would be no trouble.

"I really should be glad to be of some use to you," she said, and so feelingly, almost entreatingly, that the other, with a look of pleased surprise, gave up her perplexing charge, and returned to the perusal of her paper.

Meanwhile, Lavinia was studying the sweet little face before her. It was still young and pretty, but its charm lay elsewhere than in youth and loveliness. Sprinkle with grey the auburn hair as much as you like, and print with wrinkles the soft transparent skin, and yet the suavity of expression which comes from within would remain the same, and go straight to your heart. It was one of those faces which do good to look at, inasmuch as they convey at once an impression of moral worth, and win immediate confidence. There was something of quaker-like simplicity in the make and material of her dress: a gray gown, a dark waterproof cloak, and a gray beaver bonnet; the snow-

white border of a closely fitting cap, with no ribbon or ornament whatever, giving to the pure oval of the face a somewhat austere grace. Lavinia was greatly puzzled by this cap, which had nothing of the character of what is styled a bonnet cap, but resembled a mob cap, singularly unsuited to the age of the wearer. Was it worn in obedience to some hygienic prescription, or in a spirit of renunciation of the vanities of this life? Really, the wearer seemed to attach so little importance to personal appearance, that this second hypothesis was not unlikely. And if so, what could have detached one so young and good-looking from the world? Do what we will, there are countenances about which we cannot help speculating, nay, having an irresistible longing to know the history of their owner. Lavinia would have given a good deal to know something about her fair travelling companion — would have also given a little to know the subject and kind of interest which fixed her attention so engrossingly to the newspaper.

That the interest, whatever it might be, was of a painful nature, was evidenced by the cloud which overspread the reader's fine features as she read on. At one moment, she changed her posture, with a sudden jerk, as if to give vent by physical motion to the pressure of inner feelings. Presently the lips drooped, and from that moment the tide of anxious emotion flowed continually, until at last it overpowered the reader, who, letting the paper fall on her knees, leaned back, and shut her eyes like one in bodily pain.

"I hope you have not seen any bad news?" asked Lavinia, kindly, when her *vis-à-vis*' eyes opened again and encountered her own.

"Dreadful!" replied the lady, and without another word, she handed over the paper to the inquirer, laying her finger on a certain passage. It formed part of a correspondence, headed "Siege of Sebastopol," and told a heart-rending tale of multiform misery — snow, rain, hurricane, cholera, wrecks; tents blown down, or no better shelter from the inclemency of the weather than so many sieves; trenches turned into ditches of mud; sick soldiers driven out of the hospital marquee by the winds, seeking refuge in sheds, shivering and moaning; able-bodied men killed by cold and wet, or dying by scores of disease — a scene of utter desolation. The mere description made Lavinia's heart bleed; the sad picture took her by surprise. Too busy with her needle for months past to read the newspaper herself, never told by her general informant of the world's disasters, of these Crimean sufferings, which apparently were not in Mrs. Tamplin's line, all that she knew about the great contemporary event was, that England and Russia were at war, and that the seat of that war was in the Crimea.

In a voice of anguish, she exclaimed, —

"Can nothing be done for these poor creatures?"

"What can avail against the elements?" replied the lady, with a despairing shake of the head.

"But why is it more impossible to house the soldier now than in other wars?"

"We know little of the details of other wars, whereas one of the features of this age, is the information we have of all that is going on at a distance; however, huts are now building in England to be sent out to the Crimea, and some have been sent already. Charity is astir throughout the land, large sums are

being subscribed, quantities of clothes and medicine-chests are preparing, bands of nurses for the sick and wounded are already gone, and more will soon follow."

"God bless them," said Lavinia, "that is indeed the highest charity. May anyone go as nurse who wishes to do so?"

"Yes, I believe so; that is, any one who is not only willing, but strong. Surely you must have heard of Miss ——," and here the speaker pronounced the sweetest name of our century, a name which future generations will record with benedictions, even when those of the conquerors of the Crimea are forgotten. Yet Lavinia had never heard of it.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the other; "a name which is on every tongue."

"Mine has been for some time past a very retired life," pleaded Lavinia, in extenuation of what seemed her unpardonable ignorance.

"I understand," answered the lady, with a compassionate glance at Lavinia's black dress, and then she proceeded to give her eager listener a full account of that "angel in human shape," to use the relator's enthusiastic words, who had initiated the female crusade of mercy, and who had herself gone at their head to the east.

Amid such interesting talk, Moreton was reached, and the two ladies alighted.

"Can I be of any use to you?" asked the owner of the roses, as she took back her flower-pot.

"Thank you," said Lavinia; "perhaps you can tell me how best to reach the house I am going to — Ivy Lodge."

"Ivy Lodge?" repeated the lady in gray, in a

voice of pleased surprise. "I am going there myself, I am Mrs. Ennerly's niece."

"Are you? how glad I am. You have been so kind to me that I was really sorry to think we were going to part for ever."

"No chance of that, for the present at least, you see; since we are both bound to the same place, we will go there together. Are you going to pay my aunt a long visit?"

"The time I stay will entirely depend on Mrs. Ennerly's pleasure," answered Lavinia.

"Surely, you cannot be Miss Holywell?"

"Yes, indeed, I am the person engaged as companion to Mrs. Ennerly."

"I am very glad I have met you; you and I are old acquaintances, as it were, so that I can have the pleasure of introducing you to Mrs. Ennerly. Does she know that you are in mourning?"

"Really, I cannot tell," said Lavinia, a little surprised at this question; "I have had no communication myself with Mrs. Ennerly; a lady, a kind friend of mine, managed the business for me. Will my being in black be an objection against me?"

"I hope not; indeed, I am sure it cannot be; the first impression may not be agreeable, but one look at your face will set everything right. My aunt is an excellent woman, but rather over-partial to what is gay-looking."

"If so, my chances with the lady are small indeed," thought Lavinia, but she kept the thought to herself.

This dialogue, begun on the platform, had ended outside the Moreton station in front of some public conveyances, large and small, waiting there for fares.

Lavinia, as desired by her companion, followed her into one of these. Mrs. Ennerly's niece, to all appearance, was as well known here as at Wareham; no railway official passed her without lifting his cap, even the omnibus and fly-men behaved respectfully to her, and contrary to tradition, offered their services without the least trace of their habitual roughness. Little was spoken by either lady during the short drive. The approach of so decisive a moment for Lavinia, even without the hint that had been given as to the possible bad effect of her lugubrious garments, easily accounted for her abstraction. Neither was the current of thought of Mrs. Ennerly's niece difficult to guess, from the glances she bestowed now and then on the lovely girl by her side. She who had been the object of Lavinia's study, studied Lavinia in her turn with compassionate interest. What concatenation of circumstances could have brought one so evidently of the upper class to accept of the painful situation of a lady's companion? This was the enigma, the effort to solve which, kept Lavinia's fellow-traveller silent.

Ivy Lodge justified its name. The porch, and all that could be seen of the dwelling from the approach, was one mass of ivy. Ivy also covered the massive stone pillars on either side of the gate, and seemed to threaten with suffocation the two cat-like caricatures of lions which mounted guard on the tops. The sound of wheels brought out an old woman from the lodge at the gate, and a man-servant to the porch, while a person with a superlative cap loomed in the background of the entrance hall. Miss Schmaltz, Mrs. Ennerly's housekeeper, was a rather ill-favoured masculine specimen of German spinsterhood, whose immoderately

gaudy and huge caps were famous both in Dorchester and Weymouth.

"Good morning, Miss Schmaltz, I hope you are well; this is Miss Holywell whom my aunt, I suppose, has told you to expect."

"I am quite well, thank you, Miss Clara, and much obliged to you for your kind inquiries. What beautiful roses you have got! Dear me, I believe they are the rose Unique."

For her share of notice, Lavinia had only a stiff curtsy, coupled with a formal inquiry if she had had a good journey.

"How is my aunt?" asked Miss Clara, walking towards one of the room doors. A large spaniel here rushed upon the scene, nearly upsetting Lavinia, who could not restrain a little scream, more of surprise than of fright.

"Down, Turk, down," cried Miss Clara, seizing the dog, now in a paroxysm of barking at the stranger; "be quiet, Turk;" and she tried by mingled coaxing and threatening to quiet him.

"Shall I fetch Miss Holywell a little hartshorn or sal volatile?" asked Miss Schmaltz, with sarcastic politeness.

Lavinia felt the intended sneer, but replied in a propitiatory tone, "Oh, dear no, thank you; it was very silly of me to be so startled, I am not in general afraid of dogs."

This little incident had prevented Miss Clara's inquiry about her aunt being answered. When they were all three in the drawing-room, she asked again for Mrs. Ennerly. Mrs. Ennerly was quite well, Miss

Schmaltz hoped and trusted, and at Exeter by this time.

"At Exeter?" cried Miss Clara.

"Yes, at Exeter, as I have the honour to tell you. Mrs. Ennerly got a letter yesterday, begging her to go at once to Exeter for the christening of her friend Lady Amelia's grandchild, which is fixed for to-morrow. It was settled some time ago, as you may recollect, Miss Clara, that Mrs. Ennerly was to be godmother, when the little one came, and Sir Timothy Livingston, of Holly Park, godpapa. Somehow or other, the ceremony is to take place sooner than had been first decided, and Mrs. Ennerly had to start this morning by the nine o'clock train; and, as it couldn't be helped, she desired me to say that she hoped Miss Holywell would excuse her absence."

"How long do you think my aunt will be away?" asked the niece.

"Mrs. Ennerly was not sure how long — three or four days — perhaps it might be a week."

"It is really provoking," murmured Miss Clara, "really provoking."

"Miss Holywell's room is ready for her," said the housekeeper. "Miss Holywell will be made as comfortable as I can make her; though," added she, with pinched lips, "of course I understand that a young lady will have but a dull time of it with an old woman like me."

Here was the sting again, the instinctive protest of a vulgar nature against the claims, felt, though unacknowledged, of a refined one. It went deep into poor Lavinia's heart, as her blanched cheeks and quivering lips testified. Nothing so entirely upsets inexperienced

youth, as the marks of an hostility, that they cannot account for. Miss Clara observed all this, and made up her mind not to leave her new acquaintance alone, at the mercy of the jealous housekeeper. She accordingly said, —

“I have no doubt that you would make Miss Holywell very comfortable, and very happy, Miss Schmaltz, but it occurs to me that, since my aunt is away, I might just as well take the opportunity of doing now what must be done some day or other — I mean the introducing Miss Holywell to my sister. What do you say to going home with me, Miss Holywell?”

Lavinia had to put a strong curb on herself, not to betray, in a manner offensive to her fresh enemy, the immense relief afforded her by this proposal of her new friend. Instead, therefore, of giving way to a spontaneous outburst of joy, she expressed her thanks and willingness in what seemed to herself a very cool and commonplace way.

“Don’t thank me yet, for I have an interested motive in asking you to come to our Hermitage for a few days,” resumed Miss Clara, smiling, “which, like a postscript to a letter, though last is not least. The fact is, I have a quantity of needlework on hand, destined for the Crimea — a whole lot of flannel jackets to make, and I don’t think you will refuse me your assistance.”

Lavinia did not look as if disposed to refuse any aid Miss Clara might require, and so it was settled that the young ladies should start immediately to catch the two o’clock train for Warcham, which would enable them to reach Owlscombe, the name of Miss Clara’s home, by four. At Miss Clara’s desire, Miss Schmaltz

ordered round Mrs. Ennerly's pony-chaise, hoped to see Miss Clara soon again at Ivy Lodge, and wished Miss Holywell, in a rather prim manner, a pleasant visit.

Miss Schmaltz was not really an ill-natured woman — the *personnel* of the household over which she ruled, and even most of the poor cottagers in the village, would have given her quite a different character. She was simply jealous and imperious, and might have well adopted as her motto the famous *parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*. Had Lavinia been a common-looking girl, arriving at Ivy Lodge alone, ten to one but that Miss Schmaltz would have patronized and befriended her; being, on the contrary, beautiful and unconsciously distinguished looking, and, to boot, already known to, and a favourite with, Mrs. Ennerly's niece, the new companion was endowed with all the requisites to be a successful rival, and must, therefore, be crushed. *De-lenda Carthago*. We begin to tremble for the poor girl's situation at Ivy Lodge.

The return to Wareham, and the drive to Owlscombe did not take altogether more than an hour and a half. This time was not lost by our travellers in improving their acquaintance with one another. They had a good deal of talk upon different subjects, and unconsciously drew each other out, and to their mutual satisfaction, Though treated and addressed by Miss Clara on a footing of perfect equality, Lavinia never departed for a moment from that modest reserve of manner, which suited one in her inferior position.

Owlscombe was just what Lavinia, judging by Miss Clara, had fancied her home was likely to be; a modern, unpretending building, with nothing showy, or

even picturesque about it, but with a look of homely simplicity, for those who could appreciate it, better felt than described. Miss Clara led Lavinia to a small room on the second floor, saying, —

“I give you twelve minutes, just time enough to get ready for dinner, and not to take cold. A fire shall be made while we are at dinner. I’ll send you your trunk directly.”

CHAPTER XVII.

Owlscombe and its Inmates.

LAVINIA was received by the master and mistress of Owlscombe, as if she had been an old acquaintance. She saw at once that family union reigned supreme in the house, and that she need have no fears that Mr. or Mrs. Aveling should consider that her new friend had taken any liberty in bringing her thither, an unexpected guest. Mrs. Aveling was fairer, taller, and some years older than Clara, but in features and expression, the sisters were the living portrait of each other. Mr. Aveling was tall, swarthy, and gentlemanlike, with a profusion of iron-grey hair tossed back, and falling in weeping-willow fashion on both sides of his temples. His forehead was high and broad, but furrowed; his countenance fine and intellectual, but wanting in softness. Such, at least, was Lavinia’s first impression, an impression confirmed by his vehement manner of speaking.

The topic of conversation was, naturally enough, the hardships of the troops then besieging Sebastopol. Mr. and Mrs. Aveling had evidently also read the cor-

respondence from the Crimea, which had so affected Miss Clara during the morning's journey. The women, like true women as they were, had no eyes nor feelings but for the fact, the heart-rending fact, that thousands of their fellow-creatures were suffering and perishing miserably far from their homes. To take their share of these sufferings, as it were, by a vivid representation of all their dire variety, and to devise methods how best to alleviate those which could be helped, and prevent their recurrence for the future — such was the circle out of which the sisters never for one moment strayed.

Mr. Aveling, on the contrary, true to the combative ingredient in his sterner sex, was less full of pity for the terrible suffering, than roused to wrath by what he believed to be the cause of it; and this cause, according to his judgment, was the utter want of forethought, nay, the gross neglect, of those he termed the red-tapists. If there be any truth in the adage of the tingling of ears when we are being evil spoken of, how must these gentlemen's ears have tingled at the loud denunciations of carelessness, incapacity, &c., which irate Mr. Aveling hurled at their heads. Above all, he would hear of no allowances being made.

"No one," he cried, "has any right to make allowances where the lives of our soldiers are at stake; the life of the youngest of our drummers in the Crimea is more precious to the country than that of a dozen such hirelings at home, who, by their guilty negligence, leave our fine fellows to rot and starve amid mud and rain. I say it is a shame, a crying shame, and that they ought to be hanged for it," and with a portentous

jerk of the head, Mr. Aveling sent his long hair flying about his face.

"How fiercely you talk this evening, George," said Miss Clara.

"Do I — now really?" and he gazed round him with much the look of one just emerging from under water.

"Yes, indeed, you are very fierce; and Miss Holywell, who does not yet understand your ways, will take you for a regular fire-eater, if you go on in such a strain."

"Well, then, as I don't wish to give myself out for anything but what I am — a peaceable member of society," said Mr. Aveling, with a queer mixture of contrition and comicality, "the sooner I leave off, and beg Miss Holywell's pardon, the better. The truth is, that I have a strong and a weak point, Miss Holywell; my strong point is to hate all that is bad with the whole intensity of my reverence for all that is good; my weak one, to express my detestation of what is bad intemperately, without measure, in a sort of mad bull way, offensive alike to reason and good taste."

"It is only natural that those who feel strongly," said Lavinia, rather puzzled, but wishing to say something conciliatory, "should express strongly what they feel."

"But not violently, not rashly, not uncharitably," urged Mr. Aveling, warmly.

"Now, George, you go too far against yourself," protested Miss Clara.

"I cannot bear to hear you blackening yourself so unwarrantably," said Mrs. Aveling. "Don't believe him, Miss Holywell."

"Just listen to them, Miss Holywell," cried Mr. Aveling; "they will swear next that I am a lamb."

"So you really are," cried both sisters together.

"You be my witness, Miss Holywell," said Mr. Aveling, half cross, half pleased. "Here is a man who passes a sweeping condemnation on a number of his fellow-creatures, on no other foundation than the allegations of a newspaper — a man who gets into a passion and talks of hanging — and that man is not rash, oh, no! — not uncharitable, oh, no! — not unjust, oh, no!"

"Not a word more, pray — to please me," entreated Mrs. Aveling.

"So be it, to please you, Eleanor, and you too, Clara. Miss Holywell has heard enough to draw her own conclusions without further comments of mine."

Lavinia truly had heard enough to be aware by this time that Mr. Aveling was a simple-minded, warm-hearted fellow, with just such a proportion of impulse in his nature as to keep constantly alive his sense of justice and moral responsibility. And as she gazed on his now smooth brow and smiling face, she inwardly called herself stupid and blind for having fancied she discovered in either a want of softness. She was anxious to atone for this inner hasty judgment, and succeeded pretty well in ingratiating herself with him. The task was not difficult, for Mr. Aveling had all the simplicity and the *laissez aller* of a big boy. Even physically, there were glimpses of youth in his eyes, and in the tones of his voice, more suited to a lad of twenty than to a man past forty.

On adjourning to the library, which was the general sitting-room, the ladies took their seats round a table,

and set to work immediately on the flannel jackets for the Crimea, of which there were three bulky heaps lying already cut out upon three chairs. Mr. Aveling took up a review, and occasionally read snatches aloud from it. After a little, he put down the book, and began pacing up and down the room in a fit of musing. Now and then, as he passed the table, at which the ladies were busy, he would stop and gaze at his wife and sister with infinite complacency, sometimes play them some childlike trick, such as stealing the thimble of the one, or hiding the scissors of the other, pretending the while with the utmost gravity to know nothing of the missing articles, but sure to end by betraying himself with a laugh.

There was, of course, no lack of "For shame, George." "Did you ever see such a harum scarum, Miss Holywell?" even of bodily struggles to recover by force thimble or scissors, out of which conquered and conquerors came equally well pleased. At last the harum scarum grew composed, sat down at a small table on one side of the chimney, and began writing. The scratching of the pen on the paper, the hissing of the thread, and the ticking of the French clock on the mantelpiece, were the only sounds audible in the room.

"All is so still," said Mr. Aveling, after some time; "I wish the little birds were chirping, it might help me to my simile."

"The birds are too busy to chirp," said Miss Clara. "What simile are you hunting for?"

"A simile for the Coliseum; the image ought to be grand."

"Difficult to find one both grand and true, except

on the spot itself," observed Miss Clara. "You must go to Rome, George."

"So we will, by Jove," cried Mr. Aveling, with enthusiasm, tapping on his writing-desk. "It is monstrous that a poet — one, at least, who writes and publishes poems — should know nothing of the Eternal City, save by hearsay. But I cannot wait for my simile till I go to Rome."

"I have been there," joined in Lavinia, timidly, "and seen the Coliseum."

"What a piece of good luck!" cried George, delighted. "Did you see it by moonlight, Miss Holywell? I hope so."

"Yes," said Lavinia, "as every one makes a point of doing since the days of Byron."

"And what was the impression you received?"

"I will give you that of one whose ideas are better worth repeating than mine," said Lavinia, with a little sigh, as she recalled that evening. "A young Roman painter, who was of our party, likened the Coliseum, looked at sidewise, remember — and the image struck me by its justness — to the carcase of a gigantic ship, stranded —"

"Stranded on the shore of Time's ocean," concluded Mr. Aveling, with a flourish of his right hand. "That's it: simple, grand and true. I am much indebted to you, Miss Holywell."

"I am afraid you will have little rest now, Miss Holywell," observed Mrs. Aveling, laughing, "for I must tell you that the scene of the poem my husband is writing is precisely in Rome. I tremble at the thought of the demands that are in store for you."

"And not without cause, and not without cause," affirmed the poet, with mock gravity.

Lavinia expressed, of course, her willingness and readiness to give all the help in her power, and on went the pen and on went the needles, this time not without a brisk accompaniment from the tongues of the needlewomen. Lavinia's kind hostesses were full of curiosity about Rome and the Pope and the events of the siege in 1849, on all of which topics, especially the last, Lavinia possessed and could give, thanks to her friend Domenichino, authentic and entertaining information. Miss Clara wanted particularly to know all about the persons who had volunteered as nurses, and from whom, as stated in the newspapers at the time, the sick and wounded during the siege had met with such unremitting care. Were they chiefly ladies or women of the people? Lavinia stated what was the fact, that all ranks and stations of life had united in this work of charity. She remembered a young and handsome princess having been pointed out to her, who had been one of the foremost assistants in and out of the hospitals; and she had herself known a most interesting girl, only a poor worker in cameos — but what a rich heart she had — who had also been one of the pious sisterhood. The enthusiasm with which these nurses were spoken of by all who had seen them at their task, concluded Lavinia, was a voucher for the devotedness and efficiency with which it was done.

"It seems," said Miss Clara, with gentle gravity, "as if suffering, both in oneself and others, is an indispensable stimulant to noble exertions here below — absolutely necessary to develop in human nature what it has of divine. Troubled times are always the richest

in heroism. Only think what incalculable amount of power of self-sacrifice would lie dormant and waste, but for such occasions of being called into action, as, for instance, that direst of all calamities, war."

"Who speaks of war?" said a doleful voice from the writing-table; "I am sadly at war with myself at this minute. Doubts rush upon me like the Balaklava charge of cavalry."

"We'll bring up an auxiliary force," said Miss Clara; "I'll ring for tea."

"I want help and not tea, you unfeeling jester. I am in a bog, Nelly."

Nelly rose and bent, supple, graceful and loving, over her husband's desk. One of her arms lay coiled round his neck, and supported her delicate frame, her long ringlets fell in golden streams over his shoulders and face, and he, while explaining his difficulty, caressed the flowing curls, twisting them round the fingers of his left hand, the only one he had free — for his right arm encircled his wife's waist in a chaste embrace.

"I hope you will give us some music, Miss Holywell," said Miss Clara, while this little conjugal scene was going on; "I am sure you sing and play well."

"I ought to do so," replied Lavinia, "considering the time I have wasted on singing and playing."

"Wasted!" repeated Miss Clara; "that is 'a very severe word to use upon what seems to me one of the most elevating and beneficial influences in this world."

"I quite agree with you," said Lavinia, "in your high estimate of music, yet I cannot but regret having made it the chief occupation of my life. There are so

many other things that one ought to learn; and then music in amateurs is generally a temptation to vanity and display."

"Sometimes, perhaps, but not necessarily," returned Miss Clara, kindly; "and in a family circle it may be a great source of good as well as pleasure. George is very fond of music; and whenever something goes wrong — I do not mean at home, thank God — we have the blessing of being all of one mind in the house; but whenever some injustice, or some sad occurrence, such as that which ruffled him before dinner, puts his soul, as he expresses it, out of tune — music charms away his irritation, and —"

An intimation that she was wanted at the writing-desk, interrupted Miss Clara's confidences for the nonce.

"A full cabinet council! — some mighty question to solve," said she, laughing; "you must excuse me for a minute, Miss Holywell," and she joined her sister, and listened gravely to the matter in dispute. Her answer came quick and decided — she spoke loud enough for Lavinia to hear — she said, —

"Yes, a woman actuated by love would do it" (whatever it was, that Mr. Aveling doubted), "and remain true to her nature." Upon this, the council broke up, and the sisters resumed their seats at the work-table.

"Can you keep a secret, Miss Holywell?" asked Mr. Aveling.

"I hope I can — really, I don't know," returned Lavinia, taken by surprise.

"I am determined to run the risk of your reserva-

tion," said he, "and take you into my confidence. Here it is — I am a humbug."

"Oh, sir! oh, George!" protested three voices at once.

"I knew there would be a unanimous outcry against me; unvarnished truth always is repulsed, but — *amicus Plato, amicus Cicero, sed magis amica veritas* — I will give you my reasons for what I state, Miss Holywell, for it is to you I appeal as to an impartial judge. The verses which I send forth into the world under my name, and of which I get the credit, are none of mine."

"How can you tell such fibs, George?"

"What stuff and nonsense are you —"

"Attend to me, Miss Holywell, if you please," went on Mr. Aveling, overpowering both his opponents by his sonorous voice. "The verses which the reviewers criticize as mine, or praise as mine, belong by right of authorship to the two blessed women who are sewing by your side."

This declaration met a stout, almost angry denial, from the sisters.

"I protest to heaven and earth, Miss Holywell, that not one deep feeling or striking thought, not one felicitous image or expression, ever dropped from my pen, whose filiation I cannot easily trace to some feeling, thought, image, or expression of theirs; that not one of those gentle personations, which have given some little fame to my name, but is their work, their creation, the very essence of their souls crystallized. In short, they are at once the poet and the poem, and I but the amanuensis. Now that I have made a clean breast of it, I feel more comfortable."

"The best refutation of George's libel against himself," said Miss Clara, addressing Lavinia, "is this very poetic effusion — not his best performance, though — in which he has just indulged as to Eleanor and to me. Who but an *inborn* poet —" she underlined the word by the emphasis she laid on it — "could discover and colour as he did a flimsy paradox?"

"Specious, but unsteady at the base," parenthesized George.

"Miss Holywell," said Mrs. Aveling, "George published his first poem when he was seventeen: I don't think we knew each other at the time."

"Rather incorrect as to chronology," observed Mr. Aveling, quietly. "Evelina, if I remember, the heroine of my first production, was no other than Mrs. Aveling."

"A heroine of ten years old," retorted Mrs. Aveling.

"What matters the age? I can answer for it that I was just as much over head and ears in love with you at seventeen as I am at fort —"

"Be quiet, George; how dare you!"

"Miss Holywell, I appeal to you again; is it improper in a husband to say that he is in love —"

He could not say, or rather he chose not to say, "in love with his wife," for the little hand, which, by this time was pretending to close his mouth, was more of a virtual than a formal impediment to utterance. He shut his eyes instead, crossed his hands over his breast, and otherwise intimated his helpless condition under overwhelming force. The entrance of a maid-servant with the tea-things put a stop to proceedings which, however little dignified they may look on paper, had a charm of

their own in action, and were suggestive of much to the credit of human nature.

All work of every kind was put aside, and the party drew round the tea-table. The sisters made use of their leisure to retaliate on the poet; they recalled with merciless circumstantiality every one of his literary triumphs, from the letter of encouragement he had received when quite a lad, from the laureate of that day, down to the *furor* of tears created by his last poem.

"Fears were entertained of an inundation," said Mr. Aveling, gravely, "and boats were at a premium."

"And bad jesters at a discount," retorted Miss Clara. "I must warn you, Miss Holywell, that my brother professes the superbest disdain for the melting mood."

"But at the same time," added Mrs. Aveling, "indulges in it with sufficient zest."

"Oh, Nell! *On n'est trahi que par les siens*," exclaimed the husband.

"Listen to me, Miss Holywell," said Miss Clara, in her turn; "listen to an illustration of his masculine fortitude. He took it into his head, while writing his last poem, that the heroine, a perfect darling, should die."

"Oh, Clara! and you also!" deprecated Mr. Aveling.

"We entreated, we implored her grace, all in vain," continued the implacable narrator. "It was an absolute necessity that she should die, he affirmed. Authors are among the worst of tyrants, they destroy the flower of their flock; though justice compels me to own, that being determined to kill her, George did so in some of the

most magnificent verses that ever welled up hot from his heart. Well, he came and read them to us, as is his wont—I ought rather to say that he attempted to read them, for, at the middle of the second stanza, he began to blubber dreadfully; this gentleman, who does not look very like a baby, sobbed like one, I assure you.”

“I plead guilty, but with extenuating circumstances,” said Mr. Aveling. “Of all my creations, Bianca was my favourite —”

“There!” cried his wife, with a little shout of triumph, “he is caught. I appeal to all present, has he not confessed to being the creator of *all* his heroes and heroines?”

“You take advantage of a mere form of speech, used to avoid circumlocution,” explained Mr. Aveling. “What I meant to say was this, that of all the personages, of which you were the sun, and I only the photographic machine —”

“No, no, that won’t do — too late for recantation.”

“Well, Bianca was the one I loved best. She had become for me a thing of flesh and blood; it was not without a long and hard struggle that I made up my mind to sacrifice her. No wonder if, at the moment of striking the fatal blow, my hand trembled a little.”

“No equivocation,” cried both ladies. “Trembled, indeed! you wept like a fountain.”

“I don’t deny it, I was completely upset, there never were tears more pleasant than those I shed. Through them I had the revelation that my Galatea had the breath of life in her; through them I could say to myself, *Anch’io son pittore.*”

“Now, I am satisfied,” said Miss Clara. “Spoken like a man and a true poet.”

Mrs. Aveling said nothing, but looked the proudest of wives.

"Now for the end of my story," resumed Miss Clara. "When he was disabled, Eleanor took up the MS., read three lines, and broke down shamefully. It was now my turn. I screwed up my courage, steadied my voice, got through a line and a half, and joined in the wail. Jane came in with the tea-tray at that critical moment, and found us all dissolved in tears. She stood aghast at the sight, desperately inclined to scream and run away, as she confessed afterwards. The ludicrousness of the situation struck us so forcibly, that we all three burst into a Homeric fit of laughter, which, however, only half reassured Jane as to nothing dreadful having happened. We wasted a good deal of time and ingenuity in trying to explain to her the cause of the emotion she had witnessed, but we succeeded very ill in making the case clear to our country maiden; and to this day she looks with suspicion on George's manuscripts, which, to use her own phrase, can play such tricks with master and mistress."

Amid such pleasant talk the evening wore on. Lavinia, when again pressed, went to the piano and sang, to the delight of her audience, some popular Italian songs she had learned at Rome. At ten the family party broke up, and Miss Clara accompanied her guest to her room, to make sure that everything there was comfortable; and all being as it ought to be, she wished Lavinia good night and pleasant dreams. If dreams are but the reflex of the impressions received during the day, it was difficult indeed under that hospitable roof to have any other than pleasant dreams.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A new Link clinched by an old Name.

MISS CLARA did not appear at breakfast next morning, nor did she for several days running join the family circle till near dinner-time. Lavinia was consequently thrown on the hands of Mrs. Aveling, and was no loser by it. Miss Clara herself could not have done the honours of Owlcombe with greater cordiality and friendliness. No corner of the house or grounds was left unexplored; the conservatory, the aviary, the Alderney cows, the Cochin China fowls came in each and all in their turn for a share of notice and admiration. Lavinia's attention was especially claimed for a particular plot of ground in the garden, at which Mr. Aveling used to work every morning, as if for his daily bread; and to a little summer-house, of which he made his study in the hot season. Mrs. Aveling also pointed out, not without a little look of pride, two full grown fir-trees, which overshadowed the summer-house, and which she and her husband had planted with their own hands, and christened with each other's name, on the day of their marriage, now more than fifteen years ago.

"What a nice idea!" said Lavinia; "they have grown the very image of their namesakes; so straight, so vigorous. It must do your heart good to look at them."

"Yes, indeed; though at times it saddens me to think," said Mrs. Aveling, with a sigh, "that they will pass into strange hands when we are gone. After all," she added, waving her head as if to throw off some

annoying burden, "it is worse than foolish to indulge in regrets for what one has not, when one has so much — oh! so much as I have."

Lavinia needed no clearer hint to show her the nature of the regret, which had wrung a sigh from her cheerful hostess. Passing lovely and sweet as was the picture of the interior it had been her good fortune to have a peep of, she had missed in it a feature which would have given it completeness; a group of rosy cherubs gambolling on the hearthrug, and filling the air with their infantine voices. Yes; even Mrs. Aveling was no exception to the rule, that there is on earth no absolute felicity; even she, the proudest and happiest of wives and sisters, had a wish unfulfilled, an ambition, the most legitimate of ambitions, unsatisfied.

Let not the reader, however, imagine that this longing proved the bane of her life; not at all: there was sweet enough in her cup to drown this drop of gall. Such passing clouds of melancholy, as the thought might evoke now and then, were lost in the sunshine of love in which she walked. The Roman conquerors of old were not the worse for being reminded in their day of triumph, that they were but mortals. Perhaps, without this remembrancer of the disappointments to which all flesh is heir, Mrs. Aveling's flow of gentle sympathies for the unfortunate would have run less abundant and active. Certain it is, that this trial, if such it was, had rather tightened than otherwise the bonds of affection and reverence, which bound the two sufferers from it; for the consciousness in each of a wish ungratified in the other, acted on both as an ever fresh stimulant to that endless interchange of little tendernesses and en-

dearments, which said, in their own peculiar language, "Know that I have *nothing* to wish for."

With such, and other little confidences, Mrs. Aveling enlivened the long mornings, when they sat, needle in hand, in the cosy oak parlour at Owlcombe. What other subjects could she broach, but those of which she was full — her husband and her sister? They were all the world to her. Clara was an angel, Mrs. Aveling averred. She had refused every proposal of marriage in order to stay with her brother and sister, and do good. Doing good was Clara's passion. Her life was an uninterrupted succession of errands of charity. No needy or afflicted ones, within a circuit of ten miles, but she carried comfort and assistance to. The sick were pre-eminently her favourites. Just at this time she was the centre and soul of a movement throughout the county, for collecting funds and clothes for our soldiers in the Crimea. It was this which kept her so much from home. Clara neglected herself for the sake of others. She was far from strong. No doubt Miss Holywell had remarked the mob cap she always wore. She had been advised to wear it as a preventive against the severe headaches, from which she suffered so constantly. And yet she was never satisfied that she did enough, and yearned for a wider field of usefulness and self-immolation. Another and a deeper sigh at this place seemed to point to some special cause of uneasiness, which was left a mystery for Lavinia.

Mrs. Aveling looked upon her husband as the *beau idéal* of a hero and a genius. She worshipped his very shadow. Young, handsome, gifted beyond all men, the very essence of all goodness, as he had appeared to her girlish vision, when he came, a printed author al-

ready at seventeen, to spend the holidays at Owlcombe with her father, so he stood in the eyes of the wife woman now, after the lapse of nine and twenty years, and the same he would remain for ever. Had there ever been a friend like George? If she and her sister had a roof over their heads, were they not indebted for it to George? After the death of her father, Mr. Aveling, then only beginning his career as a barrister, had spent five of the best years of his youth, had devoted all his energies, and his little fortune as well, to save such wrecks of theirs as could be saved. Thank God, he had succeeded — not till this happy issue had been secured, had they married. How sweet to owe everything to him one loves!

These, and similar disclosures, were not made, of course, in the compressed and uninterrupted form in which they are here given, much less given in one day; they oozed out in intermittent streamlets under the pressure of scarcely appreciable agencies. One of these was unmistakeably Mr. Aveling's visits to the ladies' sitting-room. His presence left a glow after it, which was favourable to confidence. Truly, he had always something affectionate to say or do. It seemed as if he could receive no agreeable impression without enhancing it by sharing it with his Nelly. Now it was a fresh bud which had opened on some favourite plant she had placed in his study, and which she was requested to admire; now a piece of news in a newspaper, or a striking passage in a book which he knew would interest her.

When he came in with no such apparent message, which was pretty often the case, he was always saluted with the question, "Do you want me, George?"

This afforded an inexhaustible fund of merriment, for then he would wonder at the self-conceit of some better halves, who thought they were for ever wanted, and pretend that he had come to see that Miss Holywell was not being canvassed against him behind his back. At other times he would answer, —

“Well, suppose I wanted to have a peep at your sweet face, where is the harm?”

“The harm is in the saying so,” would say his wife, and, “Oh, the hypocrite!” be the laughing retort. “Do you hear her, Miss Holywell? I put it to you. Is it so very shocking in a husband to say he wished to look at —”

Probably Mrs. Aveling here rose with such a threatening aspect, that the gentleman was fain to take to his heels, concluding in his flight the obnoxious phrase, to the increased wrath of the offended party, who would run after him, and disappear in the chase.

On the fifth morning of Lavinia’s stay at Owlscombe, Miss Clara breakfasted for the first time with the rest of the family. The day was clear and fine, the ground dry and frosty.

“Just the day and the ground for a good walk,” observed Miss Clara. “Will you go out with me, Miss Holywell?”

Lavinia answered in the affirmative, and away went the two young ladies. They walked on in silence for some time. Miss Clara looked grave.

“I hope you are not suffering from one of your bad headaches,” said Lavinia.

“Oh, no! I am pretty well, thank you,” replied Miss Clara, “only vexed and puzzled.”

"But nothing seriously wrong, I hope?" asked Lavinia, with interest.

"No; only disagreeable; and I am sorry to say it concerns you, Miss Holywell."

Lavinia started.

"I have heard from Mrs. Ennerly," continued Miss Clara. At the mention of that name Lavinia's face lengthened. "There is no cause for alarm," hastened to add Miss Clara; "you are among friends, you know, who will take care of you, whatever happens."

"Then Mrs. Ennerly refuses — to — receive me," faltered Lavinia.

"Not exactly so; but she objects to your being in mourning — you know, I rather apprehended as much from the first — not that I believe such an objection would have weighed a straw, had she seen you. As it is, I perceive with pain that my aunt has received an impression — You see what a poor hand I am at diplomacy," wound up Miss Clara, with a little embarrassed laugh. "The short and the long of the matter is," she continued, resolutely, "that my aunt hints at a wish to annul the engagement she entered into with you, to annul it in a way, you understand, honourable and agreeable to both parties, if possible; but, rather than give offence to anybody, she would abide by her agreement purely and simply."

After a moment's reflection, Lavinia said timidly, "I could not take advantage of Mrs. Ennerly's considerate scruples, to force myself, as it were, into her house contrary to her wish."

"Surely not, if it were not next to a certainty that that wish would be altered the moment she saw you," said Miss Clara. "It is quite on other grounds I feel

disposed to influence you to accept of the overtures Mrs. Ennerly makes towards the cancelling of your engagement. Listen to me, Miss Holywell. I have not the least doubt but that my aunt, did I advise her to do so, would receive you immediately and kindly, and also come to like you in a very short time. I have as little doubt, but that any hostile influence, if such there were, which you might meet in her establishment, would be eventually conquered by your gentleness and candour. My doubt and fear is as to your happiness. I do not believe that, with your tastes and habits, such as I judge them to be, you could easily accommodate yourself to those of Mrs. Ennerly. For instance, she is in a constant whirl of company and entertains a great deal. During the Weymouth season, her house is the gayest of the gay. Now, would that suit you?"

"Oh! no," was the hurried answer, "I have had quite enough of gaieties; I literally thirst after retirement and obscurity."

"I guessed as much," said Miss Clara; "I am glad I have consulted with you on the subject. You will oblige me by writing to Lady Willingford so as to exonerate my aunt as much as you can from blame."

"I shall exonerate her entirely; and I will also write to Mrs. Ennerly herself," said Lavinia, "if you do not disapprove."

"Yes, do, it will be very kind of you; let us make a golden bridge for her to escape from reproaching herself too much. Of course, she owes you a handsome compensation —"

"Will you think it presumptuous of me to say," interrupted Lavinia, "that I would rather have no compensation?"

"Why not?"

"Because you have been so kind to me, all of you so very kind, that it would mortify me very much to accept of anything like money from one of your family."

Miss Clara saw Lavinia struggling with her tears, and said, —

"Well, well, I shall not press the matter further for the present; and now let me see you look cheerful again. You need not be uneasy about the future," concluded Miss Clara; "we shall not have any great difficulty in finding a situation suitable to your disposition. In the meantime we shall detain you at Owlscombe, as a most skilful needlewoman. Perhaps, I may even have to beg of you to prolong your stay at Owlscombe for an indefinite period — beg you to fill my place while I am absent."

"Are you going away?" asked Lavinia, in painful surprise.

"Yes, and for some time; but I do not go immediately," replied Miss Clara, with a little reserve of manner. Lavinia said nothing further, and they walked on, both thoughtful and silent.

Lavinia was the first to speak.

"Since you are so good as to take an interest in my fate," said she, "I will venture to tell you of a wish I have, which my engagement with Mrs. Ennerly being at an end, I may perhaps be able to realize. I am so ignorant of all practical things, that I need advice and help. Can you tell me if fifty pounds would be sufficient to take me to the East?"

"To the East?" echoed Miss Clara, in the greatest

wonder. "Do you really and positively mean that you wish to go to the East?"

"Yes; to serve as a nurse in one or other of the hospitals there," said Lavinia. "I have thought of little else ever since I had the good fortune to meet you. I should be so happy, oh! so happy to do something for my fellow-creatures."

"I can understand and sympathize with your wish," said Miss Clara; "at the same time, do not take it ill, I beg of you, if I counsel you to be on your guard against any precipitate and rash resolution. Your vocation for such a service being of so fresh a date, had you not better test it a little first?"

"Perhaps," said Lavinia, meekly, "though what you name my vocation dates much farther back than you imagine. Months ago, had I known how to manage it, I would have gone and served in the hospitals of London; from the very day, indeed, on which I learned what an amount of misery there was in the world — I was ignorant of it once and so thoughtless — from that day, not a very distant one, after all, I have begged of God each morning and evening that I might not die without been of some use."

"Have you no family ties?" asked Miss Clara.

"None, I am an orphan."

"No one on whose judgment you ought to depend, whose sanction you ought to have?"

"None, except Lady Willingford, without whose consent I would take no decisive step."

"Well, then, if Lady Willingford consent, and if within three weeks from this you are still of the same mind, your wish shall be gratified. At the end of January we will start for Scutari together."

"Together? you are going there?" cried Lavinia, at the acme of astonishment.

"Yes; when I spoke of being away from home for awhile, I alluded to my intended journey to the East; it has been a settled thing for more than a month past."

"I understand now," said Lavinia, "what Mrs. Aveling meant the other day, when mentioning all the good you were accomplishing at home, she added that you yearned for a still wider sphere of usefulness and self-sacrifice."

"Mrs. Aveling looks upon my poor exertions in this neighbourhood, with the eyes of a partial sister, that is, she looks upon them through the magnifying glass of affection. By-the-by, I must warn you, that to spare ourselves as much pain as we can, we have tacitly agreed at home to avoid all reference to the subject of my departure. It preys heavily enough on our minds as it is," added Miss Clara, with a sigh. "We love each other so dearly! we are so happy together, that sometimes I am tempted to ask myself if I am justified in taking the course I am bent on; and yet I feel impelled to it so strongly, in so unconquerable a manner."

The subject being one of too peculiar a nature for Lavinia to venture any remark upon, they both again fell into a silence, which was unbroken until they emerged from the intricacies of a small wood into a road which ran across some downs, and commanded a full view of the surrounding country. The prospect was rather dreary as long as the eye dwelt on the naked, slightly undulating spread of upland; but to the south the hills sloped gracefully down into little valleys,

which lay, as it were, folded at their feet; smiling nooks, sprinkled with coppice, hedgerows, meadows, farms, country-houses, and hamlets. A little farther off, the steeples and church towers of the old town of Wareham, rising behind leafless trees, cut sharply against the sky. A broad expanse of sea extended beyond to the horizon.

"This is a favourite spot of mine," observed Miss Clara; "I hope you admire my Dorsetshire."

"Indeed I do," said Lavinia, "lovely as it is even now in its austere winter deshabelle, how charming it must be when decked in its summer mantle of green!" and as she was surveying the numerous country-houses, which dotted the landscape far and near, her gaze was arrested by one in the foreground, which reminded her, she said, of an Italian villa, less owing to its noble proportions and vast portico, than to the two stately cypresses standing in front of it, a picturesque feature very common in Italy near any dwelling of note. The closed windows and other signs of neglect clearly pointed out that the mansion was empty; and Lavinia wondered how such a lovely place should be uninhabited.

"Poor Cypress Hall!" said Miss Clara, with a sigh; "it has been forsaken for nine years. Its owner lives abroad."

While Miss Clara was speaking, a misgiving arose in Lavinia's mind, that Cypress Hall was fraught with painful associations for her friend, and she therefore dropped the subject.

On their return to Owlcombe, the first thing Lavinia did was to write to Mrs. Ennerly and Lady Willingford, as she had promised to do, and to show both

letters to Miss Clara before despatching them. It will be as well to state at once, that she received satisfactory replies by return of post; Mrs. Ennerly enclosing a cheque for twenty pounds, which Lavinia was persuaded to accept; and thus this mighty negotiation ended to the contentment of all parties.

After this, Lavinia became Miss Clara's inseparable companion in her errands of charity, and a very docile and clever aid she proved in the art of tending and relieving the sick. Like all charitable ladies living in the country, Miss Clara had a considerable smattering of medicine, and into all that she knew herself, she initiated her pupil, who soon became as great a proficient in prescribing as her instructress.

Never had Lavinia been so busy and so happy. Her shyness and sense of social inferiority had gradually worn away under the warmth of cordiality she met from her hosts. They treated her as though she were one of the family, and she soon felt like one. And thus days and weeks rolled away, quick and full in their sweet uniformity. Here is a little incident, however, which we have obvious reasons for recording.

One evening, some chance observation of Lavinia's brought the siege of Rome again on the tapis, and among other facts she was relating, she said that one of the stanchest defenders of the Eternal City in 1849 had been an English gentleman of the name of Thorn-torn. This mention was immediately followed by one of those awkward silences, which are so painful to all present, and more especially to the person who is their unwilling cause. The sudden hush was the more striking from the conversation having been more than usually animated. Miss Clara was the first to recover

herself, but no efforts of hers sufficed to dispel the chill which had so suddenly fallen on the whole party. It was a relief when bed-time came, and they separated for the night.

Miss Clara, however, went with Lavinia into the latter's room, saying, —

“I have something to explain, and to apologize for.”

“Apologize for?” repeated Lavinia, in surprise.

“Yes, for sitting like a dumb goose, instead of having presence of mind enough to prevent your being distressed by such a mysterious change of manner in my brother and sister. To explain it, you must know that the name you pronounced this evening, has not been heard by the walls of Owlscombe for years, and is one, I must add, unwelcome to everybody here but me.”

“How unlucky that I should just hit upon that particular one!” exclaimed Lavinia.

“How could you know?” said Miss Clara, adding hurriedly, and with a good deal of agitation. “A gentleman of the name of Thornton was once our neighbour and friend, in fact he owned that Cypress Hall which you admired so much the other day. In an ill-omened moment a misunderstanding arose between him and my family; mark, it was my fault — yes, my fault — and he went away, and has never been heard of since. Appearances were against him, and in their blind tenderness for me, George and Nelly threw the whole blame on him. I, who knew better, was in duty bound to take his defence; and this difference of opinion led to some little discomfort at home, to avoid which,

by a mutual tacit agreement, all mention of the subject, even of the name connected with it, was dropped."

"I am so sorry — so very sorry," exclaimed Lavinia, "to have been the unconscious occasion of this revival of bitter associations in your mind."

"Not so bitter as you think; there is also some sweet. If there is any good in me, I owe it chiefly to having been thrown back on myself — to the recoil of the event alluded to. It was from the throbs of a noble heart that I had wounded, that a timely warning was conveyed to me. But no more of myself; tell me about this Thornton you met at Rome — was he tall and very good-looking?"

"Yes; and I should think about fifty," added Lavinia.

"Oh, no; then he must be another person. Mr. Thornton of Cypress Hall cannot be more, let me see, than seven-and-thirty at most."

"The one I knew is certainly much older than that; though, now that I think of it, perhaps it was his almost white hair and beard which made him appear so. By the by, my Mr. Thornton's Christian name is Mortimer."

"Then it is he," said Miss Clara. "Only to think of his hair being white! and when he was twentyeight he did not look his age."

"Nearly white," again repeated Lavinia. "He must have suffered cruelly; indeed, I know he has, for he told me so himself — not while I was at Rome, I could not endure him then. He was so grave and reasonable, took everything so in earnest, and I was so unreasonable, so giddy. It was not till the day of trial came that I found out his worth: ah! he is one of

the noblest and kindest of men. Without him, I do believe, I should have gone mad. And yet he was sorely tried himself at the time, and through my thoughtlessness. Shall I tell you how it was? Oh, yes, if you will allow me — if only that you may know how much I owe to him, and how much I have to atone for.”

And, Miss Clara readily accepting this offer of confidence, the repentant Lavinia related her poignant recollections of her last stay in Paris, beginning at the untoward circumstances that had attended the arrival of the young Roman painter there, describing the fatal ball at the Hôtel de Ville, the distraction, and subsequent disappearance of Paolo, down to Mrs. Jones’s sudden illness, winding up her narrative with a violent fit of crying.

Miss Clara evinced the keenest interest in the sad tale, and was not chary of words of comfort to the afflicted girl.

“You have been more unfortunate than guilty,” said she. “Cruel as it is to be in any way an instrument of suffering to others, there is consolation in the consciousness of not having meant it, at least.”

“Ah! but the injury done remains no less an injury,” said Lavinia.

“Alas! too true,” said Miss Clara, with the deep feeling of one who speaks from painful personal experience. “All we can do is to try and make atonement. You have never heard more, then, of this Italian gentleman?”

“Never; nor had Mr. Thornton, up to the date of his last letter to me, which is as far back as May. Since then all my letters to him have remained unan-

swered; and when I try to imagine the reason of this silence, I grow frightened."

"Let us hope for the best," said Miss Clara. "As we pass through Paris, you will have an opportunity of inquiring about Mr. Thornton at the place from which he dated his last letter to you; and probably you will be able to obtain some clue to his present whereabouts. If so — and something tells me it will be so — he will give you tidings, either by letter or by word of mouth, as to his Roman friend, which may set your mind a rest. The ways of Providence are inscrutable, my dear Miss Holywell. Who would have believed that through you, an utter stranger to me a few weeks ago, I should receive, after a blank of nine years, such cheering news of the dear friend of my youth? Cheering in this sense, I mean, that whatever alterations his trials may have brought in the flesh, his soul remains unchanged, that he is the same upright, noble, and tender specimen of mankind I knew him to be, and that I have persisted in reverencing to this hour. He had faults, certainly — who has not? He was morbidly sensitive, exacting, exclusive in everything; but the richness of his heart made up for all his faults. He had experienced much early injustice and harshness. His stepmother hated him, his guardian deceived him, and to recover what was his own he had to fight a hard battle for years. What wonder if a man so circumstanced should have had his temper soured, and looked less at the sunny than at the shady side of human nature!"

Thus, led on by invisible threads, the two kindly souls drew closer and closer together, and the seeds that pity and sympathy had sown, by a fresh com;

munity of interests and feelings, grew up fast and vigorous into a blessed flower of sisterly friendship.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Discovery in Paris.

THE departure of Miss Clara and Lavinia was fixed for the 25th of January. They were two of a large batch of accepted nurses — all female England would have gone *en masse*, if allowed — who were to start from Marseilles on the 3rd of February, by the steamship *Vectis*, weather permitting. The general rendezvous was to be at the English embassy in Paris, on the 31st of January at latest. Having some particular business of their own to transact in Paris, viz., to make inquiries about Mr. Thornton, our two young ladies had naturally determined to give themselves a few days in advance, in order not to be straitened for time.

We must not forget to say, before proceeding further, that Lavinia had written beforehand to Lady Willingford, and had not only received her ladyship's consent to her intended journey, and her sanction to apply her gift of fifty pounds to it, but another sum of equal value, accompanied by praises, and blessings innumerable. Lady Augusta's half-a-dozen sheets of the largest note paper were scarcely legible — not so much on account of the very small, close writing, and crossings and recrossings, as of certain patches here and there as if it had rained upon the paper.

Their last week at Owlscombe was a great trial to every one there. It was a pitiful and a touching sight to watch the looks of assumed unconsciousness and

cheerfulness with which each of the sisters practised upon the other a pious deceit, which deceived no one. Never had Miss Clara gone her rounds of charity more regularly, never had she been more indefatigable in her attentions to the conservatory, the poultry yard, the dairy, and the aviary; never showed a keener interest in the calf that was expected, or the bud of the rare camellia, which was about to open, as if such were to be for ever her engrossing occupations. Never had Mrs. Aveling been more lively and more suggestive of improvements in this or that department of the little household, or Mr. Aveling more talkative and sportive, or more assiduous in his devotion to his poem, which, nevertheless, somehow or other, did not progress very rapidly. But there were now and then sudden silences, sudden exits, and as sudden returns with red eyes, which no one perceived, of course.

Let us draw a veil over the scene of parting. It was cruel, as all partings are; more cruel than most. If the path of duty were strewn with roses, where would be the merit of walking on it? The dear sister did not go alone, there was comfort in this; she had by her side a dear and loving friend, one who would stand by her, and take care of her if — oh, may God avert it! — any evil were to befall her. Affection is always full of fearful anticipations. Nothing untoward happened, however, as far as the journey to Paris was concerned, where our two travellers were safely housed by ten in the evening of the morrow.

Though from the Hôtel de Hollande in the Rue de la Paix, where they had rooms, to the house in the Rue Neuve des Augustins, from whence Mr. Thornton had dated his last letter, the distance was scarcely more

than two hundred paces, they drove thither in a coach, in which Miss Clara might wait for the result of Lavinia's inquiries. Lavinia was shown into a parlour, where two respectable-looking women were sitting, one of whom came up to the young lady and begged to know in what way she could be of use to Mademoiselle. Lavinia, with many apologies for her intrusion, stated as briefly as she could the object of her call. On hearing which, the other, a good-natured, middle-aged, buxom woman, who had not yet spoken, came forward, saying, —

"You must be Miss Jones, who lived last year on the Boulevard des Capucines."

"Yes, and you, I am sure, are Madame Françoise, whom Mr. Thornton mentioned so often as the very best of landladies."

"Just so," answered Madame Françoise, curtsying; "the proverb is right which says, that only mountains do not meet. As to the being kind to Mr. Thornton, there was little merit in that. I never met a gentleman so easily satisfied, or so considerate and good-natured — pity he was so queer; all the English are so, I know; but he, particularly the last time he came to Paris — well to be sure I always expected he would end so."

"End how?" asked Lavinia, in mortal fear.

"Is it possible that you do not know? Mr. Thornton is —" The end of Madame Françoise's phrase was in dumb show; she lifted her right hand to the level of her forehead, and gave it a rotatory movement.

"Not — out of his senses?" cried Lavinia, looking aghast.

"No doubt of it," returned Madame Françoise, with a very sonorous "Alas!" and she would have immediately entered on a full history of the circumstances preceding, accompanying, and following the sad catastrophe, had not Lavinia, with many apologies, stopped her, saying to the one who appeared the mistress of the house, —

"Will you allow me, madam, to go and fetch a friend of mine, who is waiting down-stairs in a coach, and who, as an old acquaintance of Mr. Thornton, is equally anxious to hear about him?"

As may be supposed, this request was easily granted, and Lavinia, running down the stairs, in her agitation hurriedly revealed the whole extent of the sad intelligence at once, which so overpowered Miss Clara, that Lavinia was for putting off any further disclosures. But Miss Clara, regaining her self-command by a strenuous effort of will, would hear of no delay.

"You understand that time is precious," she said; "perhaps we may yet be of some use to him." And a minute after, the two friends were seated in the Frenchwoman's little parlour, listening, pale and mute as two marble statues, to the distressing tale.

"That *ce cher Monsieur Thornton* should give himself out to be a murderer," wound up the loquacious matron, "he who would not have willingly hurt a fly — that is what passes my comprehension. To know what a heart he had, one ought to have seen him as I have done, taking care of that young friend of his — more like a mother than a father, so anxious always: 'Won't you take a crust of bread and a glass of wine, Paul, or a bouillon, or a cup of tea: suppose we take

a drive, it will do you good;' — always something to pleasure Mr. Paul. And how often, in the night as well as the day, did he go to listen at the young gentleman's door. And no wonder, for poor Mr. Paul was an object of pity, if ever there was one, as white, and haggard, and distracted looking as if he had come out of his grave. Oh dear! I am sure I for one don't wonder at his being lost — not I, indeed."

This was, perhaps, the twentieth time that Paolo's name had been mentioned, and each time a question had been trembling on Lavinia's lips, which the terror of the answer it might elicit had frozen on them. Guessing at the cause of her friend's silence, Miss Clara at last ventured on the perilous query, —

"Was Mr. Paul ever heard of again?"

"Oh, yes, thank God, he turned up in the course of time," answered Madame Françoise. (Lavinia joined her hands, and raised her eyes — oh! what a look that was!) "A young man of Evreux, that I know very well, called Courant," continued Madame Françoise, "who studied law in Paris, met him in the month of July or August, somewhere in the Quartier Latin. Mr. Paul was just rallying from a serious illness, and was very feeble and melancholy, poor as a rat, and longing to be back in his own country. When Mr. Courant saw him last, he was busy about getting a passport. I hope he got it, and is long ago safe at home. He was an excellent youth, not like our young men — no balls, no *cafés*, no — never mind what. That Courant, who, by the way, is one of the scapegraces, though a good boy at the bottom, used to quiz him mightily, and call him sentimentalist. Better he had been more of a sentimentalist himself — Mr. Cou-

rant, I mean — and then he would not be ill at Evreux as he is, and at daggers drawn with his uncle, who swears he will disinherit him.”

As soon as Madame Françoise stopped for breath, the visitors rose to take leave, whereupon both Mr. Thornton's ex-landlady and her friend poured forth a perfect torrent of offers of service, begging the English ladies to call again, Madame Françoise taking care to explain that her time was her own till the middle of March, she being on a visit to the mistress of the *maison meublée*.

Furnished with the address of Dr. Ternel, the director of the sanitary establishment where Thornton was, Lavinia, by Miss Clara's desire, directed the coachman to drive thither at once. Little was spoken during the long drive. One is not told of the safety of the long lost, nor of his illness, his goodness, his sadness; one does not go to meet a dear and esteemed friend, unheard of for nine years, at a lunatic asylum, without a revival of feelings too deep and tumultuous for utterance. A sympathizing pressure of the hand by which they held each other, was a mute language thoroughly understood by the two friends.

Dr. Ternel's *maison de santé* stood at the western extremity of Paris, on the outskirts of the Champ de Mars. We use the past tense purposely, for it is a thing of the past. Even that tranquil and out-of-the-way corner, with its shady walks and centenary cedars of Lebanon, has been engulfed and swept away by the successive encroachments of the pickaxe, which have so completely transformed the face of Paris within the last few years. High wooden boards painted green, entirely lined the iron railings of the gate of the esta-

blishment, thus securing the interior against any indiscreet glance of the passers-by. A porter's lodge on the right hand, a snug little *chalet* on the left, and in front, beyond a trimly kept lawn, an elegant villa overshadowed by trees — such was the agreeable prospect which met you when admitted within the premises. Lest the appellation of villa should seem out of character, it may be as well to explain that the dwelling had been intended for the summer residence of the governor of the Invalides, and had served as such at no distant date. The extensive grounds attached to it stretched from the Rue St. Dominique, in which was the principal entrance, to the Rue de l'Université, not far from the banks of the Seine. Our two visitors crossed the court, as directed, and entered that of the two lesser side doors, which was on the right. A servant met them in the passage, and immediately introduced them into the study of the doctor.

Dr. Ternel was a little spare gentleman about fifty, in the neatest professional costume, and whitest of cravats and frilled shirts. There was nothing remarkable either in the details or the ensemble of his person, save a mouth full of finesse, and a general expression of good nature. Perhaps, despite the courteous frankness of his manner, a keener observer than our English ladies could be at the moment, might have noticed in his looks, and in the whole carriage of his person, something collected and guarded, something like an armed neutrality, the result most likely of a long experience of the often dangerous customers with whom he consorted, and of more than one narrow escape. A ten seconds' inspection of the two fair faces, however — just the time to rise and offer seats — brought with it

a general disarming both of body and mind, and there was nothing in the clear grey eye, as it fell upon the visitors — absolutely nothing but a plain interrogative point.

Miss Clara, who was quite unprepared with any form of speech to make clear the object of her visit, felt awkward at this tacit summons, and said at hap-hazard, —

“We are English, sir —” (an acquiescent nod and a half-smile from the doctor, intimated that she might have dispensed with this preliminary), “I mean, that we are the countrywomen of an English gentleman, who, we learned only this morning, is one of your patients, and —”

“And as such,” said the doctor, coming to her help, “take a natural interest in your compatriot. I have several English patients. Pray, what is the name of this gentleman?”

On hearing that it was Thornton, a glow of pleasure lighted up Dr. Ternel’s face.

“May I inquire without indiscretion if Mr. Thornton is related to you?”

“No, not exactly; he is a friend, only an old family friend,” said Miss Clara.

“It is not mere curiosity makes me put that question to you. In Mr. Thornton’s case it is most important for me to ascertain whether the malady under which he at present suffers is hereditary or not.”

“I cannot speak positively; but to the best of my belief, it is not,” was the answer. “I never heard him make any, the very least allusion to anything of the kind. His father, and indeed his grandfather, I am

certain, were of perfectly sane mind to the last day of their lives."

"This is good news," said Mr. Ternel, pondering. "Did this Mr. Thornton ever, to your knowledge, show any signs of particular eccentricity — anything that attracted general attention?"

"Never that I heard of. He was perhaps at all times — somewhat different to other men — more earnest, more thorough-going; always slightly melancholy, even subject to fits of depression, but never, never the least unreasonable. I speak of nine years ago."

"I beg your pardon for appearing so inquisitive; do not answer me if you have any objection to do so; but am I to understand that you lost sight of Mr. Thornton entirely for nine years?"

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Ternel had another fit of musing, then looking Miss Clara fully in the face, said, —

"I suppose, then, you are not acquainted with the sad circumstances under which Mr. Thornton's present derangement broke out. He had been for some time labouring under great despondency, consequent on the mysterious disappearance of a young man, to whom he was greatly attached. It had become his habit to visit the Morgue, with a vague terror of some discovery of this youth's untoward fate, and it was the accidental sight there of the corpse of a girl, who had drowned herself, that brought on a fit of madness, and, in fact, he attempted suicide. From that moment, his former constant preoccupation of mind about his lost friend, which was the root of his morbid disposition, vanished entirely, and its place was taken by a new one, the links of which with reality, if any such exist, it has

been out of my power, or that of any of his acquaintances with whom I have communicated, to discover. This shifting of fixed ideas is a not uncommon phenomenon in mental maladies. Mr. Thornton's present monomania consists in this, that he identifies the drowned girl he saw at the Morgue with a person, real or imaginary, whom he has, or fancies he has, wronged; this it was which led him to try and destroy himself, and this is why he accuses himself of being her murderer. He sees, argues with, and entreats for pardon this person, whom he calls Clara." Here the doctor made a full stop. "In every other respect, Mr. Thornton speaks and acts as a man of sound mind; but his interest in every thing which is not his delusion, is extremely languid and fugitive."

By the time Dr. Ternel had finished speaking, he knew what it mattered him to know. Miss Clara's feelings, struggled against in vain during the doctor's explanation, had fully confirmed a suspicion, which had crossed his mind the moment she had mentioned Thornton's name. No doubt, he had found the lever he had for the last eight months been seeking.

"Can you hold out any hope of Mr. Thornton's recovery?" asked Miss Clara, after a silence of some minutes.

"Certainly I can. I seldom despair of any of my patients, least of all of those like this one. I have witnessed such wonderful cures. I could almost answer for it if" — (every syllable of the next phrase came out in an earnest *staccato*) — "if the person he mourns over as dead, were a woman of flesh and blood, and would help me in the task."

The scarlet flush that rose to Miss Clara's face, told

the doctor plainly enough that his appeal had found an echo in the right quarter. Determined, therefore, to pursue his advantage, and strike the iron while it was hot, he continued, this time, however, addressing himself more particularly to Lavinia, —

“A task well worthy of a woman, nay, such as only the boundless devotedness of a woman’s heart can accomplish. And then think of the result,” added the doctor, his features bright with enthusiasm; “to call up harmony from chaos, to rescue a noble mind from the worst of bondages, to new create a man, as it were, in God’s image. Really, it is a task almost divine.”

“You speak of it with the feeling of one who has seen and brought about such effects,” said Lavinia, with sympathizing warmth.

“Thank God, I may say I have,” said the doctor, with elation; “but, alas!” he added, with a sudden change to grave sadness, “for a few successes how many failures — oh! how many.”

“Doctor,” exclaimed Miss Clara, “will you allow me to call again to-morrow?”

“Certainly; with the greatest pleasure.”

“I have another request to make. Could I — I think it would be best so — see the gentleman, myself unseen?”

“Oh, yes,” urged Lavinia; “pray, if you can, let us have a sight of our friend.”

“That can be easily managed, if he should be in his garden, as is probably the case,” replied the doctor; then turning to Lavinia, he asked, “Is there any reason why you should wish not to be seen by him?”

“None at all,” said Lavinia; “I should be too glad to shake hands with him.”

"Very well; however, it will be wiser that I should mention your visit to him beforehand. What name shall I say?"

"Lavinia Jones," answered the young lady, "one whom he knew both in Rome and Paris."

The ladies drew down their veils as they were desired to do, and, under the guidance of the doctor, issued through a back door into the park attached to the establishment. As they advanced, every now and then their attention was attracted by some lonely figure flitting among the trees, or gravely pacing up and down the well kept gravel walks. One of these, a tall man, closely followed by two others, hurried up from a distance towards the doctor, who whispered to his companions, —

"This patient is going to speak to me; do not be afraid, he is quite harmless, and, besides, his two servants are at his heels."

A tall, handsome young gentleman with a flowing beard bore down upon the doctor, as if he meant to run over him, but stopping suddenly, cried in an excited manner, —

"How long are you going to keep me in a mad-house?"

"Until you remember to behave like a gentleman," said the doctor, stepping briskly forward, a pace or two nearer to the speaker. "Gentlemen and reasonable persons, Mr. Marcel, show themselves to be such by treating with due respect the head of this establishment and the ladies whom they see in his company."

Mr. Marcel's eye quailed under the keen glance of the doctor, and he almost instantly turned his back, but

presently wheeled about again, and said, with much composure, —

“The ladies, at all events, shall have the benefit of this meeting; here are some of the finest emeralds which ever graced the crown of an emperor. I am making a necklace of them for Queen Victoria. Here is one for you, madam, and one for you,” and as he presented a pebble to each of the ladies, he muttered, in a low voice, “Beware! you are in a madhouse,” and hastened away.

“That is one of my saddest cases,” sighed the doctor, “a most gifted young man, an only son, the pride and delight of talented, wealthy, fond parents; and scarcely any hope left, for his malady is hereditary. He lives in that little cottage on our right, and Mr. Thornton in that with the green jalousies and the small walled garden in front. He seldom comes into the park, he prefers solitude. I will go in first,” said the doctor, as they reached the gate of Thornton’s residence, “and should I think the moment favourable, I will send a servant to conduct you to a good post for observation, and then I will come myself to fetch Miss Jones, when I have prepared the gentleman for her visit.”

The two ladies were shortly joined by a man-servant, who led them up to a room on the first floor, and having drawn the muslin curtain of a window which looked into the garden, left them there.

Thornton was sitting on a bench by the side of a big hole he had been digging in the earth. A spade and shovel lay at his feet. A shade of unspeakable sadness clouded his gentle features, as he sat pensively resting his chin on his right hand, and looking into the hole. Nothing in the outward man announced the dis-

order of the inner one; on the contrary, everything about him, his beard and hair, now entirely white, his loose dressing-gown, his linen, were all clean and properly attended to.

"You see what I am doing," he said, in answer to the doctor's inquiries, "I am acting the grave-digger."

"Indulging in your morbid fancy, you mean," observed Dr. Ternel. "Graves are dug to receive corpses. I see none here."

Thornton shook his head, and answered nothing.

"Mr. Thornton, I say," cried the doctor aloud, "where is the corpse?"

"It was here when you came — lo! there it is," and Thornton pointed to a corner in the little enclosure. The doctor went to the spot indicated, and, sawing the air with his arms in every direction, kept saying, —

"There is nothing here, don't you perceive that there is nothing; how could I toss my arms about as freely as you see me doing, if there were any obstacle in the way?"

"No one saw the spectre of Banquo, save he who *was* to see it — the murderer," groaned Thornton.

"A spectre!" exclaimed the doctor; "but that is unsubstantial — how can you expect to bury that which has no substance?"

Thornton smiled, and hung down his head without answering.

"Oh! Mr. Thornton," resumed Doctor Ternel, passionately, "how can you, a gentleman, a scholar, and, above all, a Christian, allow yourself to be made the sport of such idle dreams?"

"Dreams!" repeated Thornton. "Let me tell you that there are more things in heaven and earth, Dr.

Ternel, than you dream of in your philosophy. There! now! don't you see her?" and the monomaniac started up, clasping his hands imploringly, his eye fixed in the direction of a tree.

"Come, then, let us follow and force an explanation from her," said the doctor, laying hold of Thornton's arm.

"No, no, no!" cried the Englishman, in an agony of terror, and grasping at the bench he had been sitting on.

After a pause, Dr. Ternel said, —

"There is a lady here who wishes to see you. Are you listening to me, Mr. Thornton? A countrywoman of yours, a friend of yours, is come to pay you a visit — Miss Lavinia Jones."

Not a muscle of Thornton's face moved.

"Do you not remember Miss Lavinia Jones, a tall, handsome young lady, whom you knew at Rome and also here in Paris?"

"I may possibly have met her," said Thornton.

"Allow me to tell you that it is not very amiable of you to receive the news of a friend's visit so coolly."

"What matters who comes or who does not come — now?" returned Thornton, with great dejection.

"Shall I tell her to come to you?"

"As you like," was the reply.

The doctor went for Lavinia.

"How glad I am to see you again, Mr. Thornton," faltered the young lady, with assumed glee, as she came in; "my good and excellent friend, do you not remember me in the Palazzo Morlacchi at Rome, and in the Boulevard des Capucines, here in Paris?"

The cloud rolled from the cast-down countenance,

which cleared for a second, but in a twinkling the deep shadow overspread it again, the lustrous eyes wandered from the beautiful face down to the black dress, and there remained riveted.

"It is well and right that you should wear mourning for her," he said, slowly; "all the world ought to wear it; there is not left a creature like her."

"I am in mourning for my dear aunt, Mr. Thornton — poor Mrs. Jones, who was so kind to me; you must remember her — she is gone from this world," and Lavinia's eyes filled with tears.

"Don't cry, don't cry, poor thing," he said, compassionately; "it is worse than useless. All the tears in the world could not make another Clara; but what we can do for her, is to give her Christian burial," and he took up his spade.

"I have been staying in Dorsetshire, and seen your house, Cypress Hall — what a delightful place it is. You will go back there some day, Mr. Thornton, won't you, to live," but he paid no heed to her. Lavinia persisted in her efforts to gain his attention. "And Signor Paolo is found, and safe in Rome; blessed news that, is it not?"

"No news to me," replied Thornton, with a start at the mention of the name. "I knew he would reappear one time or another to bear witness against me."

"Against you? Oh! Mr. Thornton, he would stand by you against all the world, and love you, and comfort you, as he did at Rome."

"Pshaw! everything is changed now; he is sworn to tell the truth, and tell it he will — he said so himself to me here. But now, excuse me, I must go on with my work, or I shall be behind my time."

A glance from the doctor warned Lavinia that the interview had lasted long enough.

"Well, then, good-bye, my dear, dear friend," said Lavinia, scarcely able to restrain her tears, and stretching out her hand; Thornton withheld his.

"Will you not shake hands with an old friend?"

"Better not," he said; "no good can come of touching my hand; the smell of blood is on it still. You recollect that line, 'All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten it;' very true, too true," and he recommenced his digging.

Miss Clara had not lost a syllable nor a look of what had been passing in the little garden.

Not a word was exchanged between the three, as the ladies, pale and mute as shadows by the doctor's side, were reconducted through the park back to the entrance gate.

"*A demain*," said the doctor, as he handed Miss Clara into the carriage.

"*A demain*," she answered, and the long and warm shake of the hand which accompanied the words, gave them a significancy, which a man of Dr. Ternel's penetration could not mistake.

CHAPTER XX.

The Result of the Discovery.

THE result was — all that the reader foresees. Startling events are not our province; on the contrary, nothing gladdens our heart like the seeing what is to follow, anticipated from what has preceded. Let Miss Clara tell her own story: —

“DEAREST ELEANOR, DEAREST GEORGE,

“WHAT should we have said to any one, who, when I parted from you only a week since; had ventured to predict that my journey to the East would end in Paris! I see from hence Nelly’s look of amazement at this piece of news, answered by an ominous shake of George’s mane; not altogether unwelcome the announcement, I fancy. Now or never is it a case for quoting, “Man proposes, God disposes.” Yes, I hope and believe that I am not indulging in a superstitious feeling, when I allow myself to trace the finger of God in the course of events which have led to this issue. The way in which it has been brought about does seem marvellous when I recall its several steps. Had I not delayed my going to Scutari for two months in deference to your wishes — had I not during that interval met Miss Holywell on her way to my aunt — had it not so happened that my aunt was from home, Miss Schmaltz unusually cross, and Miss Holywell in so sore a puzzle what to do with herself, that she enlisted my sympathies in her behalf, and that I carried her off to Owlcombe, why — But it is really cruel in me to be retracing at

my leisure every link of a chain of events, while your curiosity is on the rack. To make my story clear, I must, however, go back a little.

"Miss Holywell, you must know, while at Rome, had become acquainted with Mr. Thornton, and circumstances followed which caused the acquaintance to become intimacy. The last time she had seen him was in Paris, some nine or ten months ago. He had promised to write to her, but as, after her return to England, she never received any letter, she had some misgivings, and one of the first things she did on her arrival here was to try and find out what had become of him. I cannot now enter into some details, principally because doing so would involve the disclosure of other people's affairs — suffice it to say, that once informed of Lavinia's anxiety, I fully shared in it.

"Our inquiries were successful, and we have found him — if a man can be said to be found whose better and nobler part is missing. Dear sister, dear brother, the gay beginning of my letter will not have prepared you, I am sure, to hear that we found him the inmate of a lunatic asylum. Oh, my dear ones, what a sight! I cannot tell you what a mingling of agony and tenderness swept through my heart, when I looked at the sad wreck of my former friend. I used to think I knew what it was to feel for others. It was a mistake — no, never till that moment did I learn what active charity was like. Thank God, I am here; thank God, I can be of service! At first I could scarcely identify him — his hair quite white, his noble figure bent like an old man's, yet nothing haggard in his countenance; the same gentle and mild expression as of yore; but so thin, so pale, so sad! My heart —: no, I can't write

what I felt. He was digging a grave — his habitual employment — a grave for a woman he had wronged and killed; that is, for me, whom he fancies dead through his fault. In this fancy lies the root of his madness. The misgiving of his past injustice has been his crown of thorns for these nine years, a crown of thorns that has pierced to his very brain. Oh! my dearest brother and sister, what woman worthy of the name could stand the appeal conveyed by such a fact?

“Need I, after this, plead his cause with you? I am sure I need not. I know that, as you read this, all heaven of resentment passes away from your hearts. But I owe it to him to say, that if he sinned against me. — and he did wrong me — I was not myself exempt from blame. Indeed, I was not. The subject is disagreeable to you, but bear with me while I tell you now the whole truth; nor must you imagine that I am wilfully blackening myself, because I refuse to be thought better of than I deserve. You were not with me when the circumstances I allude to occurred.

“I had gone on a visit to my aunt at Ivy Lodge, for the purpose of attending one of the Moreton assemblies. It was my first ball, and I was quite carried away by the gay scene, and the lovely music. What girl of nineteen but is fluttered on such an occasion. Among the company, more than usually numerous and brilliant, aunt singled out, and introduced to me in a very marked manner, a young officer. Aunt, I must say, had neither eyes, nor ears, nor smiles for anyone but this gentleman, who was neither prepossessing in manner nor appearance; but then he was the son of an earl. His attentions to me became, during the evening, so pointed and assiduous as to

attract general notice. Probably, he was not aware that I was an engaged girl, nor that my future husband was at the ball; and I, with the stupid bashfulness of my age, and country education, lacked both the courage and the tact that would have enabled me to check this young coxcomb of a lord. He laid regular siege to me, prevented any but himself from approaching me, insisted, in a way I knew not how to resist, that I should dance every dance with him — (Thornton, as you are aware, never danced) — and when I expressed a wish to sit down, led me to a corner, and sitting down by me, cut me off from all communication with the rest of the company. Now, believe my confession, that, annoyed as I felt at this sort of persecution, still I was not insensible to the honour done me by the principal person in the room.

“Thornton, and in this he was wrong, did nothing to help me out of my awkward predicament; on the contrary, kept aloof. I remarked this with pain, as well as the vexation his looks betrayed, but soon forgot everything in the excitement of a new quadrille. I had a glimpse of Thornton at the door of the supper room, as I was going in with my lord. I did not see him again that night. He called at Ivy Lodge the next day but one; he was cold and grave, and I read reproach in his eyes. I received him peevishly. Aunt’s taunts about what she called his neglect of me at the ball, had influenced me to believe that I had rather received than given offence. I need not remind you that aunt was anything but friendly to Mortimer. His measured remonstrances called forth ungracious answers. What had I done? I had been civil to those who had been civil to me; I had danced with those who had

asked me. Where was the great harm? Why had he not danced with me himself? I knew, he said, that he never danced. That was no reason why I should not, was my repartee. For what did a girl go to a ball, but to dance? Ah! for what else indeed? echoed he significantly.

"My lord came in at this instant. He was full of the races, the dinner and the ball, which were to take place at Weymouth on the day after the morrow. His present visit was to make sure that we had received invitations. I assured him that we had our tickets, and should certainly be there. Mortimer went away without another word. Next day brought me a short note from him: —

"Will you give up, for my sake, your Weymouth ball? The request may seem unreasonable, but you are so good and so indulgent to my whims, that I venture to make it."

"I made up my mind to comply with his wish, and showing aunt the note, told her I should not go to the ball. Aunt was incensed with the note and with me; the note was absurd, ridiculous, odious, my complying with it an impossibility, and she gave me plenty of reasons why it was so. The end of it was, that I wrote in answer, that much as I wished to humour even his whims, aunt declared that I could not do so in the present case, without infringing every rule of good breeding and of good society. The ball was given at the barracks, and as we approached the gate, I perceived Thornton standing there; he bowed low, but did not make the least attempt to accost us. I believe he was in the ball-room for some time, but I did not see him.

"You know the rest. The next evening I received a letter from him dated London — the letter in which he told me he released me from my engagement to him; that he did so, not in anger, but in the sad conviction that, being such as he was, he should be unable to make me happy. Was the punishment disproportioned to the offence? Strangers might deem it so; but I, who had had a twelvemonth to judge of his peculiarities, who had accepted him for better and for worse — oh! no, I could not think it so. The scales fell from my eyes, and I at once measured to the full the extent of my fault, and the worth of the heart I had wounded. That letter marked a new era in my life, and I may say without exaggeration, that if there is any good in me, I owe it to the man who penned it. Thus far I have thought it my duty to unbury the past; and now let us consign to everlasting oblivion all that relates to that ill-omened transaction.

"The sanitary establishment of which Mortimer is an inmate is under the management of Dr. Ternel, an eminent physician, and a most worthy man, who has a passion for his calling, and better still, infinite devotion to his patients. Our friend could not be in better hands. With what might well be taken for divination, Dr. Ternel at once detected that I was the very person he had been longing for all these eight months. For you must understand this, that nothing but reality can dispel Thornton's morbid delusion; nothing but a Clara of flesh and blood can obliterate and put to flight the shadowy Clara, which haunts him by day and by night. So, you see, that I am the only person in the world, who can effect a cure — if a cure is to be effected — and Dr. Ternel is sanguine of success. God grant that

his anticipations may be realized! As mine is to be no small part in the pious task, in fact, the chief one, under the doctor's guidance and direction, I have, of course, no reserve with him on this matter; while he, like the true-hearted and plain-spoken man that he is, is above all things anxious that I should not be the dupe of what he calls my generosity. Consequently, he has kept from me, not only none of the difficulties of the present, but also none of the responsibility of the future. 'For,' says the good doctor, 'even in case of success, don't imagine your task to be over. To confirm that success and render it definitive, your constant presence will be indispensable for a length of time; without that, a relapse would be inevitable. In a word, my dear lady, you must learn to consider yourself the guardian angel of this gentleman, and stick to his side as closely as his own shadow. Unfortunately, we live in a sceptical age, and even the part of a guardian angel, when enacted by a young and handsome lady, might be liable to misconstruction.' (The doctor is short-sighted, which accounts for his calling an old maid of eight-and-twenty, young.) 'There is a way, however, of getting over the difficulty. I beg your pardon for my seeming audacity, but my motive must be my justification. If you could take upon yourself to do now for Mr. Thornton, in the event of his recovery, what you promised and intended to do nine years ago, I could almost answer for there being no return of his present attack.' I answered, that if indeed my presence was of such vital consequence to Mr. Thornton, and he should ever express the slightest wish that I should become his wife, I could and would consent. So do not be surprised, my dear George and

Eleanor, if one of these days you are pounced upon by a jolly couple. Speaking in earnest, the situation of a wife-nurse to a man, whom of all men I respect, has nothing in it that repels me — quite the contrary. Ours would be a sort of joint-stock association, to do a little good in this world, and Thornton's ample means would go far to secure the prosperity of the association.

“For the present, my only occupation is to go every day to the doctor's *maison de santé*, and hear progress reported, for the patient is now undergoing a sort of preparatory training. All Dr. Ternel's indefatigable ingenuity is brought to bear on a single point, that of impressing upon Thornton the notion of my existence. The doctor refers constantly to many particulars connected with our days of courtship, and which I communicated for this purpose. The doctor represents me as full of life and affection, quite bent upon finding Thornton. It is painful, yet at the same time curious, to hear their conversation respecting me, for most of these discussions I overhear, according to the doctor's wish, in order that I may become familiarized with Thornton's aspect, ways, and habit of thought. A Madame Françoise, a kind old soul, with whom he lodged for some time, is the most useful auxiliary in this part of the affair. In a little while, I shall have to write a letter to Thornton, and another to the doctor, fixing on a certain day for my arrival, and on the effect of these letters the doctor greatly counts. A piano is to be put near the doctor's private room, and I am to play once familiar airs, and sing the songs of the merry days, when we were young. Ah, me! and the doctor will manage to bring Mortimer somewhere within hearing.

But neither letters nor music will be resorted to, until the present preparatory discipline has given some favourable result. Then, should the plan so far succeed, I am to show myself; and I pray to God to give me courage, and to inspire my words, for much, if not all the cure, will depend on my presence of mind, and unwavering resolution.

“But even should we fail in the first trial, we shall not despair. Dr. Ternel has a second scheme in reserve — an *en cas*, as he calls it — which he thinks would be worth the trying. It will be to take Thornton to England, to Cypress Hall. His native air and the sight of familiar objects may, so the doctor avers, produce a favourable crisis, when all other measures have failed. In that case, a young physician, one of the most skilful of Dr. Ternel’s pupils, is to accompany us to England, and we are implicitly to obey his directions. Should things come to this, then, my dearest brother and sister, we shall indeed require your kind assistance, and I know we may depend on that. Let us, however, hope that there may be no necessity for any call upon you.

“I enclose a note from Miss Holywell. She starts to-morrow morning for Marseilles in excellent company. I cannot tell you how much I regret to part with one, who has proved to me a sincere and affectionate friend. By a strange coincidence — providential might be a better word — she also has had tidings of a person she was much interested in, and whose disappearance, under very suspicious circumstances, had been a source of wearing anxiety to her, and also to poor Thornton. This person was a young Italian artist, to whom Thornton had much attached himself at Rome; and

from what Miss Holywell has said, I can understand that Thornton was also once of much use to her in trying circumstances, here in Paris — I mean before this illness of his. You see the man was born to do good to everyone he had to do with. Miss Holywell always speaks of him as the best of men. Without him, she declares, she should have gone mad.

“Do not be uneasy about me, or my whereabouts. I am in capital health and spirits, and very comfortable in this *maison meublée*. The landlady is quite respectable, and Madame Françoise is on a visit to her, and both of them take every possible care of me. You must not, therefore, think there is any necessity for your coming over here on my account. If I want you, believe that I will write to summon you. And now, good-bye, dearest brother and sister, and believe me,

“Your ever affectionate,

“CLARA.”

Among the several letters despatched that day by Lavinia, was one addressed to Signor Paolo Mancini, Rome, of which we shall hear at some future day.

CHAPTER XXI.

Awakening.

PAOLO in the meantime had little joy of his halt in the mire. The longer his body stuck in the bog of sensualism, the less his soul got acclimated to the foul atmosphere. A being organized to soar, cannot crawl without suffering from the violence done to its nature. How could he, who had dreamed all his life, and for a

short while had tasted of the ambrosia and nectar of requited love, how could he be satisfied with the food of swine of which he was now partaking? And yet, loathsome as it was, he lacked the strength to turn from Circe's proffered cup. He who wonders at this inconsistency, knows little of human nature. The *video meliora, deteriora sequor*, has been a phenomenon common to all times. Exuberance of youth, idleness, force of habit, and last not least, that most tremendous of bars to a good resolve, "For whose sake now?" were the enemies which kept Paolo balancing himself uneasily on the slippery slope. But whatever the blandishments used, they could not silence the inner witness, who cried to him now and then, "You debase your immortal soul, you give the lie to every precedent of your life, you are a contemptible wretch — shame, shame upon you!" With so sensitive a patient there is room for hope. The sick man who does not feel his disease, is past recovery; for one who groans and laments himself, there is the chance of a favourable crisis.

Our sinning young hero had gone to bed at four in the morning. Not, however, in the Rue St. Georges, where we left him; his friends had decided, not himself, that apartment to be too shabby and mean for him; besides, there was no coach-house or stable attached to it — too great an inconvenience for a man, who no longer hired, but kept horses and carriages of his own. Paolo then had rented a second floor in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, capacious, gorgeously fitted up, and extravagantly dear. Well, then, he had gone to bed about four in the morning, after a night as ill-spent as may be. He had played and lost a round sum of money — lost it certainly to very gentlemanly persons, but, as he had

every reason for believing, sharpeners into the bargain. Money, in general, was the least of his troubles, indeed, he squandered it with a sort of rage. In the present instance, it was the way in which he had been tricked out of it, that galled and provoked him. A man does not find himself enacting the part of a dupe, without wincing a little, and, to render Paolo justice, the strings of conscience had also something to do with his sleeplessness. On what he had staked and lost, two families of honest artisans might have lived in plenty for a whole year. Prosper did not earn a quarter as much in a twelve-month by his unremitting labour. Then he began to wonder what had become of the little man, of Prudence, of the children, of Benoît and Dr. Perrin, of Mr. Pertuis and Mr. Boniface. They might be all dead for anything he knew. He had not only not seen any of them, or sought to see them for ages; but he had literally forgotten them, ungrateful wretch that he was. It was not till the dawn began to peep through the silken curtains, that something like calm stole over his senses, and allowed him to sleep — a heavy unhealthy sleep.

He was dreaming of a violent ringing of bells, when what was in reality a most formidable pull of his door-bell, succeeded in thoroughly awakening him. He sat up in his bed and listened; the faint echo of an angry debate in the room preceding his salon, reached him. What could it be? He jumped out of bed, slipped into a brocade dressing-gown, and shouted through the salon, —

“What’s the matter, Victor?”

No answer being vouchsafed, and the noise of the scuffle without, continuing unabated, Paolo pushed open

the door leading to the hall, and saw Victor, with his back to him, defending the approach to the salon, parrying, with a chair held in front of him, the attack of a smart little fellow, brandishing a broom twice as long as himself, by which he was striving to brush Victor out of his way. At first Paolo was struck dumb by surprise; the next instant, little disposed to merriment as he was, the ludicrousness of the scene was too much for him, and he burst into a glorious fit of laughter. Salvator — for Salvator it was, threw down his broom, and, holding his sides, sunk on a chair, convulsed; while Victor, his face as red as his waistcoat, looked on in grin expectation of what was to happen next. Naturally, this was that Paolo and Salvator fell into each other's arms, giving and receiving the hearty hug of brotherhood, on seeing which, Victor relinquished his chair, and withdrew in undisguised disgust.

"By Jove!" cried Salvator still laughing, "you are better guarded than the Pope; it is no metaphor to say, that one has to fight one's way to your presence. I may well sing with the libretto, *A pugnar m' accinsi, o Roma* —"

"Hush!" said Paolo leading the way to his bedroom, for he began to wish for more covering than even his wadded dressing-gown.

"Why hush? — is singing forbidden in private in the classic land of *chanson*?"

"Certainly not, but it is so early."

"Early? my fine fellow, do you call eight o'clock early? You seem not to be aware of the fact, that, *Da tre ore il sol ris-ple-eude*."

"The fact is, it's the fashion about here to keep rather late hours," returned Paolo, a little abashed, as he

drew aside the curtains, and opened the jalousies. The flood of light he let in was like a reproach.

"The saints preserve me!" cried Salvator; "you are lodged like a cardinal, and habited like the Grand Signior."

"Or like a fool" said Paolo, with a side glance at the sky-blue cachemire pantaloons he was even then donning. "But never mind me just now; rather tell me about yourself and Clelia, and all my old friends. Are you married? and how is it you are here? why did you not answer my last letter?"

"Your letter of the beginning of November, with the one for Clelia, enclosing the cheque for 1,000 scudi, you mean? — for the simple reason that I never got it until our return to Rome from Palermo, a fortnight ago. Clelia and I, you must know, spent the winter with the marchioness, at Palermo, or rather, to be precise, near Palermo, at a villa belonging to a sister of Prince Rocca Ginestra. As there were to be operatic performances, and acting, and tournaments, Clelia and I were, of course, articles of absolute necessity to the marchioness. As it turned out, she might have dispensed with us, as, instead of gaieties, we had nothing but jealousies, quarrels, and confounded confusion, as of old. But all that is nothing to you, nor yet to the post, who did not forward my letters, because, not expecting any, I had taken no precautions to have them sent on. Thus it was that, returning to Rome in the middle of February, I thought myself a favourite of fortune to find your letter of November still awaiting me — and then it was I learned, for the first time, that difficulties were raised by Government to your return. Finding also no letters of a later date, I grew uneasy about you. Why

should I not do like Mahomet, and go to the mountain, since the mountain could not come to me? Clelia encouraged the idea; money I had in plenty, without touching the 1,000 scudi, which, indeed, are intact. So I put myself *en route*, and, after a week's stay at Turin, to satisfy myself from what quarter the wind really blew there, I arrived in Paris yesterday morning. My first visit was to Rue St. Georges, the address marked in your last letter. I was told there that you had long left, they no longer remembered for what neighbourhood. I then went to Mr. Prosper's, Quai Montebello, the address you gave me in your first letter. Mr. Prosper sent me to Rue du Four; nobody there knew of your whereabouts; and, in short, without that excellent Madame Prosper, I never should have discovered you. We spent the whole of yesterday in tracking you, with the genius and patience of a policeman, from Rue du Four to Rue St. Georges, from Rue St. Georges to Avenue Montaigne, and from Avenue Montaigne here. I called three times last evening, but the porter said you were not at home, and would not let me in. Very grim personages these French porters. But your jackanapes in red sleeves beats them all. *Midi* and *midi*, and *midi* again — I could wrench from him nothing but *midi*. What could I do under such circumstances but drop all parley, and push forward a reconnaissance. Red sleeves bars the way, and skirmishes with a chair in defence of the approach.

'Ah canaglia vuol battaglia,
E battaglia ti darò.'

sing I, and at him with a broom. Luckily you appeared, like a *Deus ex machinâ*, in time to prevent further hostilities."

"My good friend," said Paolo, half touched, half amused, "what a deal of trouble I have cost you! It was like you to come, and it is, I assure you, like a providential interference to have you here. I have so much to say, oh! so much."

"And I such an impatience to hear all you can say; but tell me first about Thornton — no, first about Miss Lav — By the by," and Salvator bounded up from the sofa like an india-rubber ball, and began fumbling in his pockets: "if I am not mistaken, I myself am the bearer of news of *la Diva*. Where is it got to now?"

"Where is — what?" asked Paolo, in great agitation.

"A letter addressed to you, which I found at the post-office in Rome, and I had no end of discoursing to do, before I could rescue it from the officials there. Ah! here it is, in my very last pocket."

Paolo seized the letter, broke the seal with shaking fingers, and literally devoured the contents. This was what Lavinia wrote, —

"Paris, 31st Jan. 1855.

"MY DEAR SIGNOR PAOLO,

"Passing through Paris, I have heard from Madame Françoise of your safety, and indeed that, in all probability, you are at this moment once more in your dear Rome. I feel so happy and thankful at this news, that I cannot resist the temptation of telling you so. But when I try to find words adequate to my feelings, nothing comes but tears — sweet tears, and inarticulate blessings. Accept them — not the less for being unspoken — accept them, though they are from one who has rendered you evil for good. Most sincerely and humbly do I entreat your forgiveness. Indeed, indeed,

I knew not what I did. I saw without understanding, and mistook the semblance for the substance. I was intoxicated with prosperity and flattery. Since we parted, I have become acquainted with that stern, but friendly monitor, adversity. I needed humbling, I needed sobering, and this austere friend has done both for me. The trial has been a hard one, but blessed be the day which brought it to me; blessed be the day which opened my eyes to the knowledge that life has duties, and that in the performance of duty lies true happiness; and, so help me God, I will do my part. How many other truths you tried to impress upon me, and which, passing unheeded at that time, now rise up and people my memory! Believe me, my recollection of you is indissolubly associated in my mind with all that is good and noble, while when you think of me — Oh! Signor Paolo, how you must have despised me! and I deserved it well. But now you may give me back your esteem; you may, indeed; I am entitled to it. Not for my eternal salvation would I impose on you. The only claim I impose on you is for your esteem; every other I can and do entirely give up; let the past be in every other respect as if it had never been, but your esteem I must have. It is, I feel, the staff on which I rely, to support me on my thorny path. It is not likely that we shall ever meet again in this world. I am setting off on an expedition from which I may never return. But wherever I am, you will have my earnest prayers for your welfare, and for that of your country also. May its destinies be what your patriot heart desires; and now, good-bye. All good be around you.

“LAVINIA.

"P.S. — Don't imagine I wish to justify my past folly, but one thing I must state in my defence. It was not my fault, that I inflicted that last disappointment on you in Paris. What I said in my hurried note was the exact truth. I went to the ball against my will. I was positively forced to go. From thence date all my troubles. Mrs. Jones was taken ill there, and never recovered. She is dead. Sickness, estrangement, and death followed in the wake of that night. Surely you will forgive me. Mr. Jones and I have parted for ever. Adieu."

Paolo threw down the letter with a gesture of despair, buried his face in the sofa cushion, and sobbed desperately.

"What is the matter? Good heavens! is the news so bad?" cried poor Salvator, in an agony of sympathy. Paolo pointed to the letter. Salvator took it up and read it. "Upon my word," said he, after the perusal, "though I don't understand it quite, I cannot see anything in it to put you into this state. There is a horrible hint, to be sure, about her never coming back, but she may, you know; it's only mountains that never meet."

"It is not that, it is not that," sobbed Paolo, swinging his buried head from side to side, like an obstinate child.

"If it is not that, I don't see what vexes you," pursued Salvator; "perhaps it is that the dear old lady has departed this life."

Still the head oscillated in sign of denial.

"If it is not that either, I give up trying to guess what it is," continued Salvator, with just a shade of

impatience. "All the rest, to my common-place vision, at least, reads well and promising. She confesses to have done wrong, like a brave, honest girl, asks for pardon, and begs for your esteem."

"My esteem," groaned Paolo.

"Well, well, the word is rather icy, but in the dictionary of lovers, you may take it as a rule," added the little man, wagging his head with a great air of wisdom, "that esteem stands for love."

"Don't say any more, don't say any more," exclaimed Paolo.

"I assure you I am right; why, any one with a grain of sense can understand what she means; just look at the way she speaks of you; everything you ever said or did, quite right in her eyes; every one wrong but you."

"That is exactly what I cannot bear; that is what is enough to drive me mad," burst forth Paolo, standing up, in a whirlwind of passion. "Praising me! I tell you it is horrible mockery, a downright profanation; every word she writes cuts me like a knife. My esteem! I have none to spare for myself; my virtues are those of swine; my goodness! hell is full of such. I wish I were dead!"

"Paolo!" shouted poor Salvator in new-born terror; and taking hold of Paolo's hand, he raised himself to the level of his friend's eyes. "Paolo!"

"Don't be afraid. I am not out of my senses," said Paolo more composedly; "it would be better for me, perhaps, if I were. I am not mad, but a degraded being, who recoils, horror-struck, from his own degradation. You yourself are the mirror in which I see it in full length."

"I?" exclaimed Salvator, in increasing perplexity.

"Yes, you. There you stand, in your manly simplicity and innocence, the living reproach of my effeminacy, my profligacy. Those ridiculous coxcombs we used to call women-men, and make sport of at Rome, I am one of them, nay, worse. A glorious figure I cut in my Turkish morning costume, don't I? Look at my collection of whips, canes, cravat-pins, wrist-buttons, and scent-bottles, and be lost in admiration. Worthy property for an artist, is it not? By and by, the hair-dresser will be here, and elaborately arrange and curl my hair. How manly! ha! ha! Why don't you laugh too? Open the safety-valve, or, by Jove, you will be choked by contempt."

"Come, come," expostulated Salvator, who now began to have some inkling of the state of the case, "you take things too tragically, a moment of weakness is soon retrieved. For a man of your spirit, to shake off any worldly shackles requires but the will."

"And the inward bonds, friend Salvator! Samson pulled down pillars; did he free himself from inward bonds? His ideal dragged in the mire by Dalilah, was he ever able to raise it again on its pedestal? My soul is a sink of pollution."

"Nonsense!" here ejaculated the little man.

"Such a life, such orgies I should rather say, as I have revelled in for these last three months, you cannot imagine; to tell you of it, would be to contaminate you; but there, in that *escritoire*, lie materials for the history — scented documents signed by names renowned in infamy. Foulness, foulness, foulness, has been my daily pittance. Everything respectable, everything holy — chastity, patriotism, disinterestedness, honesty — I have

heard quizzed, lampooned, cursed — heard it without wincing, until, by G—, I have come not to know right from wrong.”

“Fibs!” exclaimed Salvator. “If that were the case, you would not talk as you are doing.”

“And now that I have sunk so low as to be past any hope of ever rising again,” pursued Paolo, without heeding his friend’s interruption, “here comes my finishing stroke — a glimpse of Paradise to madden me on my dunghill. Purified through suffering, restored to her angelic nature, she who was the embodiment of my ideal of a woman, lays her innocent heart open before me, prays for peace, and lavishes blessings on me — O heavens! on me, a lump of corruption! The fate of Tantalus — the draught of happiness within sight, and yet never to be reached. My own doing — that’s the comfort I have — my very own doing. Do you understand what Tantalus may feel in such a predicament, Salvator? That he’ll not go on for ever suffering, I should say.”

“Hush!” cried Salvator, “this is the raving of a Pagan; we are Christians, Paolo, and, as such, must think, speak, and act. Suppose yourself in the next world, have you escaped from yourself there? Be a man.”

Paolo for all answer covered his face.

“Besides,” continued Salvator, descending from his unusual altitudes to the level of an argument *ad hominem*, “besides, allow me to observe, that it is but a sorry welcome to a poor devil who has come all the way from Rome to see you, to tell him —” Here Salvator came to a full stop. “I say to threaten —” The good little fellow could not finish his remonstrance.

"Forgive me, Salvator," said Paolo, wringing his friend's hand; "I am not the unfeeling wretch I may seem. It was that letter which upset me — that letter, with the associations and memories it evoked — it sets old wounds bleeding afresh."

There are emotions which admit of no utterance but tears.

After a while, Salvator exclaimed, —

"It's just one of the tricks of this nasty Paris."

"Not at all," said Paolo. "Paris is a place like any other, it is within one's option here, as elsewhere, to live simply, reasonably, and yet agreeably. I question if there be any other capital in Europe where there are so many opportunities for self-cultivation and honest recreation. Everywhere public monuments, picture galleries, libraries, lectures, gardens, and what not, accessible to the public gratis. Temptations also of all kinds there is no lack of in Paris, nor is there in any other huge metropolis; but their high price here, as elsewhere, acts as a safeguard for the great majority. Money has been my bane. But for it, I might still be the honest fellow I was when I came here, and look every man in the face without a blush. Talk to me of the corruption of Paris! Misery threw me among the hard-working class. There, in that humble sphere, my friend, you may find all the virtues inculcated by the Gospel in action — Charity first and foremost. Later again, benignant fate brought me acquainted with the studious of Paris. My employer was a savant, simple as a child, learned as a Benedictine. Good Mr. Boniface! — his mind in a constant state of contention lest he should overtask me. No scarcity of good examples there, for his friends were cast in the same mould

as himself — living rather in the spirit than in the body. All the elevating influences which can improve a man, I breathed in that atmosphere. About that time I met with a wild young student, a good fellow at bottom, but a Voltairian *quand même*, who took to hectoring me, to drag me down from my height of spiritualism. In vain; I was firm as a rock. Poverty and constant occupation kept me out of temptation. Then, I received that fatal legacy, and ere long, idleness aiding and abetting, I was low enough in materialism. My guardian angel whispered warnings to me to refuse it, but my evil genius prevailed. The moment I was rich, I was transformed from my old self to another being, and from weakness to weakness I sunk to what you find me — a grovelling sensualist. There is a curse in money, Salvator, believe me."

"Well, if it be so," replied Salvator, "the remedy is easy. Cast from you that curse, and begin life anew on bread and cheese."

"And so I will, by all that is holy," cried Paolo.

"At it at once," urged Salvator; "put on your shabbiest coat and hat, to be in keeping with mine, and let us go out. Do you know of any place where we are likely to see any blackbirds?"

"Possibly in the Tuileries, or Bois de Boulogne; but, to tell the truth, I know nothing about birds, or trees, or flowers."

"Well, let us take our chance with both places."

"My good fellow," said Paolo, with a very significant unwillingness, "the Tuileries and the Bois have been the theatre of more than one of my follies, and besides, I am sure to meet at either the one or the other, hosts of people I know."

"Hm! can you think of no retired nook, where there are turf and trees, and none of your acquaintances?" pleaded Salvator.

Paolo mused a little, then said, —

"Yes; though it is ages since I was at the place, I remember being struck by the number of blackbirds in the cemetery of Mont Parnasse.

"A cemetery!" repeated Salvator, with a grimace indicative of anything but gratification.

"You must not be alarmed by the name. A burying-ground in Paris is a fresh, verdant, quiet spot. You will like it well, I promise you."

"Here then goes for the burying-ground," pronounced Salvator.

Paolo was ready in a few minutes. Victor listened grimly to an intimation that the room off the *salle-à-manger* was to be got ready for the new arrival.

"Is the hairdresser to wait for monsieur?" asked Victor, solemnly.

"No; tell him not to come any more till I send for him."

"Is the carriage to be sent to meet monsieur?"

"No; and tell Pierre I shall not want him to-day, and that he may consider himself at liberty for the whole of next week."

"And should any visitor come for monsieur?"

"I am out of town; let the concierge know."

"Is monsieur absent even for — the person who breakfasted yesterday with monsieur?"

"Even for that person," and monsieur shut the door with a bang.

Victor looked despondent for a second or two, then rallying his spirits, he lifted up his right leg, leant his

head to one side, stretched forth both arms, and gave to all limbs concerned a vibratory motion to and fro in the direction of the door — a sort of blessing *sui generis* to his master.

The only precise idea Paolo had of the whereabouts of the cemetery of Mont Parnasse was that it lay somewhere on the other bank of the Seine; but thanks to that thread of Ariadne, which in the person of “commissionnaires” is ready for use at almost every corner of every street in Paris, the friends were not long in being put in the right track. Prejudiced as he was against Paris — most foreigners are so on first coming thither — disposed as he was to find fault, Salvator was nevertheless too fair not to acknowledge the usefulness of this provident institution; and when he espied in a bye-street the familiar sight of a vendor *sub dio* of roasted chesnuts, Salvator’s heart relented for good and all, and he openly allowed France to be a civilized country, whatever her shortcomings. Incredible how far these imponderables go in determining our estimate of objects and places! Salvator improved the occasion, and stuffed his pockets full of his favourite eatable — horribly dear though, as he said — and then he held a little conversation with the seller, and discovered him to be a native of Italian Switzerland.

Another and agreeable novelty to the small painter were the number of shops with flowers and funeral-wreaths, garlands, statuettes, and mementoes of many kinds, which studded the immediate neighbourhood of the cemetery. Paolo bought some garlands of ever-green, which he intended for little Annette’s cross, if he found it, which he did not; nor did his conscience reproach him in the least, that by so doing he was en-

couraging an immoral traffic on the holiest sympathies of mankind, as is urged by some people. Would to God that the spirit of commerce were never applied to worse purposes!

The cemetery of the Mont Parnasse is one of the humblest of the French capital, yet not the less impressive for that. Few and far between are the pompous monuments — vain protests of posthumous vanity against the stern equality of death — many the modest slabs of marble — innumerable the anonymous crosses, suggestive alike of obscure lives, and Christian humility. Not one but had a wreath hung round it, or a tuft of flowers carefully reared at its base. Go thither at what hour of the day you will, and you find pious hands are busy — many of them the horny ones of artisans, or the sorely needle-pricked ones of seamstresses — clearing away, embellishing, propping up or watering the silent home of their departed ones. It is in this assiduous care of the living for the dead, that lies the great charm of the Paris burying-grounds.

Salvator could scarcely understand the scene at first, and when he did, he nearly vented his pleased wonderment in a profane *ut de poitrine*, which he checked, however, in time, declaring instead most emphatically, that if the respect for the dead was to be taken as the measure of the worth of the living, the Parisians certainly were superior to their reputation.

"Let us sit down here," said Paolo, "and enjoy the prospect from this mound."

The view before the friends had a melancholy charm of its own. Not a tint, not a sound, not a movement in the vast enclosure at their feet, but was subdued to harmony with its destination. The mellow light of a pale

March sun, the gentle undulations of the plain, the twitterings of birds, which filled every ivy-bush and eypress, the tender green of the new shoots on sycamores, acacias and pendent willows, were the soft notes, if we dare use the expression, from whose *ensemble* arose a full chord — a chord which struck home to the heart, inclining it to reverie.

"A beautiful spot, and full of blackbirds, I declare," said Salvator at last.

"Did I not tell you, that even though a cemetery, it was beautiful?" replied Paolo, as if awaking. "Sweet must be the rest under this verdant turf, and in these quiet shades."

"True — but not before a journey, let us say of fourscore years in search of some grand object," returned Salvator spiritedly.

Paolo shook his head despondingly, upon which Salvator thought the moment a fitting one to remind his gloomy friend, that for him, Salvator, Paolo's history, since his departure from Rome, was still a mystery. Salvator knew nothing of Thornton, nothing of Lavinia, and was still in the first wonderment as to what had caused so complete a severance between the three friends. Paolo, not unwillingly, consented to relate the particulars of a tale, which had lain long heavily hidden in the depths of his heart. He now poured forth his sorrows, told of his fit of frenzy on learning that Lavinia had gone to the ball at the Hôtel de Ville, his subsequent illness, his useless search after Thornton, and the conclusion he had come to, that Thornton had gone to the United States in search of him; and last but not the least momentous event to

him, his accession to his uncle's fortune, and his subsequent dissipation.

Salvator was so moved by this narrative, a real romance he declared, and which as such, must end well sooner or later, and then so dreadfully excited by the sight of a blackbird perched just below where they were sitting, whistling and trilling, as if in defiance, that he protested he must either give way to his singing propensities, or choke. To avoid one or other extremity, it was better to beat a timely retreat; in effecting which, a savoury smell which exhaled from a small wineshop by the roadside, a smell suggestive of cutlets on the gridiron, and of potatoes in the act of frying, came to remind Salvator of one of his idiosyncracies — viz. that any strong emotion infallibly made him hungry. A halt was accordingly decided on, and the young men entered the humble eating-house. It was without effort as without repugnance that Paolo seated himself at a small table with a coarse cloth — he was at bottom still as simple in tastes, notions, and habits as when at Rome; and riches, thank God, had not inoculated him with any of that fastidiousness, which teaches people to turn up their noses at everything not set in gold, or bearing on it the stamp of fashion. Paolo did ample justice to the frugal meal. A stomach of five and twenty will assert its rights, whatever the mental frame of the owner.

After this they walked to the Luxembourg, strolled leisurely through the gardens on to the Pantheon, which concluded their walking tour of Paris for that day. It was eight in the evening when a cab put them down at Paolo's door in the Chaussée d'Antin — it was the only drive they had had, and that was necessitated by

Salvator's portmanteau having to be fetched from the fourth-rate hotel, to which he had gone on his first arrival. No wonder they were ready to drop with fatigue, they had been nearly nine hours on their legs.

CHAPTER XXII.

Tedium Vitæ.

WELL might red-waistcoated Victor, and his colleague of the whip, deplore the degeneracy of the age, and indulge, glass in hand, at their quasi-fashionable wine-shop over the way, in ominous forebodings how all this would end. Ever since the advent of little *saute ruisseau*, as they styled Salvator, the life they led had become sorry and unprofitable. No more *billets doux* to carry, no more mysterious visitors to introduce, no more cases of champagne and Strasbourg *pâtés* to order, no more *parties fines* to superintend; and naturally no more little douceurs to realize out of these several items. The snug little establishment which they had served with such complacency, was turned, alas! into a désert. How else designate a house, the master of which sallied forth at seven in the morning, returned at dusk, and was in his bed at ten!

Such was, in fact, the course of life adopted of late by Paolo, under the influence of his friend and guest. They went out early, spent most of the day in visiting public galleries or other remarkable places — when tired of being on their legs, jumped into the first omnibus they met, stopping where it stopped, most frequently at a barrière, occasionally in a suburb — took their dinner at the nearest restaurant, and then returned

home, either by the same omnibus or a similar conveyance, Paolo having laid it down as a rule never to hire a cab.

Nor had he wished to do so, would Salvator have allowed of it. Salvator delighted in the omnibuses; he considered them as the most wonderful, instructive, and amusing contrivances of modern times. His power of observation, which was of the scantiest, and his propensity to communication, which was of the largest, both found full scope in those rolling stages, whose actors were for ever changing. Nothing deterred by his ignorance of French, he spoke freely and good-humouredly right and left, making friends among his fellow passengers — rarely leaving the vehicle without being on intimate terms with the benevolent gentleman — thank God, there is one at least in every batch! — who assists in and out the aged and infirm, the children and the ladies, and is for ever on the stretch, with danger to himself of a twisted neck or spine, in his readiness to collect the fare of those in the farthest off seats, for the conductor. Even within the small compass of a public carriage there is a plenty of room for the exercise of the smaller charities of life. Unfortunately — and our little friend was not long in making the discovery — there is space also for selfishness and harshness — and your active, good-natured, kindly disposed gentleman finds his contrast too often in yonder gruff individual, who looks upon every newcomer in the light of an intruder, nay, of an enemy, and would not for any consideration move an inch to accommodate a delicate woman or child, and snarls when inadvertently brushed against — a living negation of all human fellow-feeling.

This half-artistic, half-nomadic existence was the very one for Salvator to enjoy, had not Paolo's increasing gloom cast a shadow upon it. Paolo grew more self-absorbed, less sociable every day; the very topics nearest his heart, Lavinia, Thornton, Clelia, Rome, seemed to have lost their hold on him; he dismissed them with monosyllables. If he spoke at all, it was to agree with Salvator's praise of picture or statue, of the weather, or the scenery, or living creature, in a strain far too high-flown and exaggerated not to betray a pre-determination. But even such kindly effort was too much for him in the evening. Neither self-control nor self-reasoning could soften or stem the paroxysm of dejection, which after dark seized on him, crushing body and soul in its cruel grasp. He would plead fatigue, stretch himself at full length on a sofa, and lie there for hours with closed eyes and lips. All Salvator's attempts to rouse him — and God alone knows the ingenuity, the patience, the gentleness, displayed by the little fellow — proved unavailing. The only result was a "Don't mind me, I am tired to death; I am past entertaining now," or such like phrase; which made Salvator droop his head and look grave and anxious.

Gravity and anxiety sat ill at ease, almost unnaturally, upon Salvator's childlike brow and cheery features. One evening — it was the fifth the young men had thus spent together — one evening, Paolo awaking, as it were, from one of his trances, his eyes met those of his friend riveted upon himself, and the change in the familiar face, once so mirthful, now so forlorn, gave him a qualm of remorse, rousing the latent warmth of his heart.

"Oh! my poor Salvator!" exclaimed Paolo, "what a selfish, unfeeling, ungrateful wretch I am!"

"Heyday! what a luxury of adjectives," said Salvator, brisking up; "may I inquire their drift?"

"It is my destiny to bring misfortune on all those who love me. I am killing you by inches."

"Stuff!" laughed Salvator. "I am of too tough materials to give way so easily; you grieve me deeply, I don't deny it; but as for killing —"

"My only excuse is that I cannot help it. I am not a free agent. The axe which inflicts death is not more responsible than I am. Indeed, Salvator, I cannot help it."

"Try as much as though you could," replied Salvator; "perhaps your distemper lies in this same morbid impression of your helplessness. Perhaps there is nothing more required to cure you, than a manly effort to shake off the incubus. Make it, summon up all the energy of your will."

"Ah! my will — forsooth! you have thought of a mighty lever. My will is like a worn-out key, which doesn't bite any longer. Bid a man, stung by a cobra cabello, exert himself; he has neither the power nor the inclination; hot pincers won't make him stir. All that survives of him is a desperate craving for rest. So it is with me. I am stung by a serpent whose name is *tedium vitæ*."

"At it again!" groaned Salvator, with a sort of shudder.

"If you knew what it was to be sick of life," continued Paolo; "if I could describe the feeling to you! On our journey hither we had to pass through a long

tunnel. It must have been somewhere between Lyons and Paris. My recollections of that journey are dim and confused; I was restless in body and mind, and my feelings were undoubtedly morbid. Nevertheless, I remember that tunnel well, and the effect produced on me by the passage from broad daylight to pitch darkness, and the shrill, fiendish yell with thousands of yells compressed in it, which, as we tore madly along, seemed to cheer us on to destruction. Then all sense of motion onwards ceased, and there we were, as I fancied, oscillating in the vacuum, suspended over the abyss. Oh! the horror of that moment. It was more than I could stand, I was ready to jump out of the carriage window. Well, what that tunnel was, life has become to me, it is unbearable. I long to be out of it."

"Nothing of the kind. Away with such feelings," burst forth Salvator with an energy and vehemence the more startling, as nothing hitherto in his look or manner had given any warning of the direful impressions he was receiving from Paolo's words. "A thousand times no, I say, unless you choose to have to answer for another life as well as your own, for the ruin of two Christian souls."

"Salvator!" exclaimed Paolo in a subdued voice.

"Yes, your life and my life, your soul and my soul. We'll have no equivocations between us; play false to yourself, my good fellow, and here I solemnly swear to follow your example."

"O Salvator!" groaned Paolo, "I did not expect this of you."

"And I, poor fool, who left house, country, friends in the fulness of my affection for you, do you think I expected such a welcome as you have given me? Tc-

dium vitæ must be a precious selfish disease, if it blinds you for a moment to the monstrous part you would have me perform — the part of a mute confidant in a living tragedy, which is to snatch from me my best friend, the friend in whom I prided and delighted." Here the speaker was obliged to stop, for his voice had grown dreadfully husky; but at sight of Paolo's eyes glistening with tears, he cleared his throat in a hurry, and pursued his advantage. "To die is to surrender; far nobler to fight against all odds. Take example by Miss Lavinia. Did she despond under her trials? Not she, but took her staff, and started on the Lord knows what errand, like the sweetest of pilgrims. And why should you not do as she did? Look out yourself for some such noble task, as I am sure hers must be. To those who have a country to free, there can be no lack of scope for action. There is the Crimea, for instance. Will you go to the Crimea?"

"Go to the Crimea?" repeated Paolo, with the most undisguised astonishment.

"Just so; why shouldn't you help to take Sebastopol?"

"You mean, that if I am so desirous of death, I might perchance find a glorious one there. True, that would be a certain benefit to myself, but I see none to my country."

"Apart all other considerations," replied Salvator, "methinks he is doing good service to his country who contributes his best to uphold the honour of its arms. Piedmont is sending some thousands of her soldiers to the Crimea — join them. That is the spot where a man may live or die with credit."

"I don't dislike the idea," said Paolo; "but could

I, a republican, consistently with my creed, serve under a royal banner?"

"Why not, if that banner be an Italian one, and floats wherever a blow is struck for the independence of Italy? Take my word for it, Sebastopol is the first stage of the journey to Milan."

"If I could only believe that!" said Paolo.

"Why should you doubt what all Europe believes by this time? If it were not so, why should the Piedmontese meddle with the war at all? Be so good as to follow my argument. Sardinia has no interests of consequence to look after in the East, she has no old grudge against Russia to gratify; Sardinia is still bleeding from the wounds she received in 1848 and 1849; her debt is heavy, her credit indifferent, her exchequer all but empty. For a kingdom in such a condition, there would seem but one course left, that of neutrality. If Sardinia discards this self-evident policy, and takes upon herself the chances of a war, depend upon it, she must have a mighty inducement for so doing; and what other inducement could tempt her, but a promise from the Western powers, a formal promise that if Sardinia lends a hand towards the reduction of Sebastopol, England and France will lend her two towards ridding her of Austria in Italy?"

"Seeing is believing," said Paolo, sententiously. "You spoil a plausible argument, by trying to make it comprise too much, my friend."

"Not a bit," affirmed Salvator, who had his own reasons for colouring richly: "I tell you it is all settled, and set down in black and white. When a cup is full, a drop is sufficient to make it overflow. Austria has been fooling France and England in this Oriental busi-

ness for many a long day, and their cup of patience is fairly running over. They wish to humiliate her — they tell her so in so many words. Down with Austria, and long live Piedmont, is the burden of the song of their newspapers, and the newspapers after all represent the opinion of a country.”

Paolo shook his head doubtfully.

“I know the objection you are about to make,” went on Salvator, “that the press is not unfettered in France. Reason the more, if it be not, to believe, that it expresses at least the views of the government; for, what the government might, yet does not prevent, it indirectly sanctions. That is plain enough, is it not? However, let us lay aside the French press, if you will not believe in it, and turn exclusively to the English. If ever there was a free press in the world, that is one, you allow that — very well. Open any of its public journals, and what do you find? Columbus teeming with sneers, denunciations and threats levelled at Austria, and with praises and encouragement for Piedmont. You look surprised at my knowledge, my dear fellow; all these articles are translated into Italian, and re-published in the Turin papers; and there, in that nest of Italian liberty, I feasted my eyes on them. Yes; you should read the comparison drawn between the selfishness and sluggishness of the huge empire, the backwardness of its ruler, the crooked ways of its statesmen, with the pluck of the little kingdom, the chivalrous spirit of Victor Emmanuel, the daring of its premier. Austria is set up as a scarecrow, and Piedmont as an example.”

“Very possibly,” returned Paolo; “but have you forgotten our proverb: *Dal detto al fatto, ci corre un gran tratto?* (From word to deed, there is far indeed.) I re-

member Thornton warning me against trusting to such ebullitions of feeling. In 1849 there was something similar to what you now describe, which, nevertheless, did not hinder our being left to our fate. The immense majority in England, Thornton bid me believe, do not consider the Italian cause worth the sacrifice of a drop of English blood, or the out-lay of a single English guinea. Their real sympathies, he said, were all with their old ally, Austria."

"*Were* so, I allow," cried Salvator, "but *are* not so now. You confound the days of Pitt with those of Lord Palmerston; you overlook the Concordat with Rome, that dealt the death-blow to Austrian influence in England. Side with Austria, forsooth! Why, Austria is the negation of all that makes Great Britain great." And the little painter went on to prove mathematically to the incredulous Paolo, that the English to a man were against Austria, and for Italy. Poor, innocent, simple-minded Salvator!

Much more than we choose to relate was added on either side, still no immediate practical result came of this conversation. However stringent Salvator's arguments, however tempting the prospect they opened to a man afflicted with *tedium vitæ*, they failed because a participation in what he called a kingly war, involved in Paolo's eyes, as a first consequence, the abandonment of the principles which, right or wrong, he had always held. Salvator must rest content with carrying to his bed the consoling assurance, that his friend was far less dead to the interests of this world, than the himself believed. Night brought him no sleep, but it did counsel. About three in the morning, he went and knocked at Paolo's door.

"It is only me; are you acquainted with Manin?"

"Not personally," was the answer given so readily, that it showed Paolo must have been already awake.

"Why do you ask?"

"I mean, do you consider him 'a leader to be trusted?"

"Entirely; who doubts it?"

"And," pursued Salvator, "were he to say that a course of action was right that you deemed wrong, would you abide by his decision?"

"I think I should," replied Paolo.

"Very well; that is all I want to know. Good night."

Ten seconds after the active little fellow was in his bed again, and his mind at rest, in another ten seconds he was snoring placidly.

During his short stay at Turin, Salvator had heard much about Manin, and of the conciliatory line of policy adopted of late by the great Venetian. Manin in fact, not long before, had published his new programme of "Independence and Unification," that programme which, whatever may be said to the contrary, did so much towards preparing that unanimity of purpose and of action, which a few years later, was to form the admiration of all the friends, and provoke the despair of all the foes of Italy. Thrice happy in this, that he did not live long enough to see the worse than useless issue of his work of conciliation for the heroic land, alas! which had given him birth, the land he had loved so well, so wisely, so valiantly — alas! for his own Venice! Well, then, it so happened that Salvator had had given him at Turin the address of the illustrious exile in Paris. This circumstance, almost forgotten amidst his constant preoccupation about Paolo, now returned to his memory

in this hour of need, and he resolved to turn it to account.

When, next morning, Salvator proposed a visit to Manin, Paolo raised no objection, only regretted their not having a letter of introduction to make their access to the ex-dictator more easy.

"Never mind that," said Salvator; "you know the proverb as to good looks; your face must serve to recommend us; and great men, you know, are the property of the public."

Manin occupied a small and more than modest lodging in the third story of a house in the Rue Blanche. His reception of the two young men was full of that frank cordiality, which is a distinctive trait of the Italian character. Manin had his hat on, evidently ready to go out, when his unexpected visitors appeared; nevertheless he would not permit of their going away, as they wished to do, but said he had a quarter of an hour at their service. Paolo, therefore, after giving his own and his companion's name, their calling, and their country, stated in as few words as possible the case of conscience he had come to submit to Manin's judgment. Could he, without betrayal of his republican faith, join the Sardinian ranks in the Crimea?

"Which do you care most for?" asked Manin, "the Republic or Italy? Italy, of course. To be either a republic or a monarchy, Italy must first exist as a nation — that is, be independent — and form one body. Every act which tends towards that end — to make a united Italy, I mean — deserves the support of all patriots, whatever their creed. Is the co-operation of Piedmont in the Crimean war to be considered an act of this sort, a step in the right direction? I do not hesitate to say

it is so, inasmuch as it widens her circle of influence in Europe, and strengthens her hands for good, inasmuch as it places her in manifest antagonism with Austria, inasmuch as it furnishes a precious occasion to add to the prestige of Italian arms. Those who go to fight under the three colours of Italian redemption, are not the soldiers of the Piedmontese State, but the soldiers of Italy. Would to God that I were young enough and strong enough to be one of them."

As soon as he ceased speaking, Paolo and Salvator rose to go, but he detained them, adding, —

"I have been subjected to much obloquy lately for being too favourable to Sardinia. I view Sardinia as a great national force. Is that a good or an evil? It is a fact — and this fact, moreover, is monarchic. Are we to render it hostile to the cause of emancipation because it is so, or are we to turn it to good account, taking it as it is? The question is not a question for me, at all events. I declare that for my part I am ready to accept of monarchy, if monarchy is to give us an Italy independent and one."

The door had been gently pushed ajar while he was speaking, and the moment he stopped, a female voice — (ah! pity him, not that of his wife or daughter: both lay in their freshly opened graves) — a female voice said warningly, —

"Mr. Daniel, it is striking eleven; you know you have to go to Rue Pigalle."

"Thank you," said Manin to his careful *bonne*, "I am off;" and snatching a book from a table, and putting it under his arm, he led the way down the stairs to the street-door. There he stopped and said, with emotion, "Good-bye, my young friends; may all success attend

you in the pass you have chosen. Honour certainly will, for it is the path of duty. My blessing goes with you. To the rising generation which you represent, to the simple in mind, and stout of heart, Providence reserves the great work of Italian emancipation. Peace, peace at all costs among the oppressed, that their united war-cry may be like the trumpet before Jericho, at sound of which the ramparts of the oppressors shall crumble into dust. You will see that day, young men."

"And so will you," exclaimed Paolo and Salvator, with enthusiasm.

"Not so, not so," replied Manin; "the spirit is strong, but the flesh is weak. *Dies mei numerati sunt*, I may say with the Psalmist, nor do I regret that it be so. Once again, farewell." And with a friendly squeeze of the hand of both, he hurried away. Paolo's heart sunk within him as he watched the tottering steps of the noble man, and he thought to himself, why this mysterious dispensation which dooms the flower of a whole nation to live and to die brokenhearted?

"Bravo!" cried Salvator; "a man worth his weight in gold; every word of his hits the bull's-eye; though, allow me to observe, that what he has said, much more pointedly, I confess, is just what I had the honour of telling you last night. By the bye, though, I should like to know why he goes about with an Italian grammar under his arm."

"Manin gives lessons to live, and therefore carries with him the tools of his trade. Yes, oh! mockery of fortune, the ex-dictator of Venice is reduced to sell participles!"

Salvator mused a little, then said, —

"And why not? Poverty at all times has been the seal of true greatness. Deck Homer with a mantle of purple, seat Dante in a carriage and four, and see what a sorry figure they will cut."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Leave-taking.

PAOLO was for starting that same evening.

"But your passport?" objected Salvator.

Paolo was for starting without passport. Salvator shrugged his shoulders. A man does not travel from Rome to Palermo, and then to Paris, as he had done, without growing keenly alive to the importance of the item in question. He said accordingly, —

"More easily said than done, my dear friend — I mean as far as the arriving at our destination is concerned. Let us reserve extreme remedies for extreme evils, and first try what the Sardinian consulate will do for us."

Taking this good advice, Paolo with his wise little friend went thither. Strong in his good conscience, Paolo stated his case briefly and simply; he knew, he said, after making his request, that he had no specific claim upon the Sardinian government, yet he was not without hope that the anomaly of his situation, coupled with the object he had in view, that of enlisting for the Crimea, might entitle him to some consideration.

"Certainly," said the gentleman, to whom his application was made. "If I understand you right, your object is to reach Turin."

Paolo bowed assent.

“Very well, excuse me for a moment,” continued the official, leaving the room. He returned in a few minutes accompanied by another gentleman, who said to Paolo, —

“Can you give me the date at which you asked for a passport at the Nonciatura and were refused?”

Paolo named the beginning of the month of September.

“Nearly seven months ago — time enough indeed to come to resipiscence,” said the second gentleman, smiling. “Such being the case, I think your best course will be now to renew your application there; if still unsuccessful, come to me again with two respectable fellow-countrymen of ours, who can testify to the refusal, and to your own identity, and I will give you a passport for Turin. It will be but a temporary one — to serve only for the journey. Will that do?”

“Perfectly,” said Paolo; “I am much obliged to you.”

Salvator here producing his passport, asked, —

“Will you accept of me as one of the witnesses you require for my friend?”

Glancing over the passport tendered to him, the Sardinian gentleman replied in the affirmative.

Renewing their thanks, the two young Romans took their leave, and following the advice they had received, went immediately to the Nonciatura. But the hearts that they found there were as hardened towards Paolo as Pharaoh's to the Jewish lawgiver. Salvator, however, took the opportunity of having his own passport *viséd* for Rome.

“Now then,” said he, as they walked away from

the unaccommodating Nonciatura, "now for this second witness. Do you know any Italians in Paris?"

"Not one," said Paolo.

"Then we must apply to Du Genre," quoth Salvator, "he is the man to help us, he knows everybody." But this suggestion was so evidently unpalatable to Paolo, that Salvator, stopping short, turned upon his companion with an inquisitive "What's your objection?"

Paolo could not bring himself to any specific explanation; so Salvator, with pitiless good sense, continued, —

"My good Paolo, when necessity drives, squeamishness must be got over. Du Genre is the most serviceable fellow on earth, and I can't understand any one hesitating to ask a favour of one so cordial. We have no time to lose, and recollect that he who will the end, must will the means. Come, let us go to Du Genre without more ceremony."

The Frenchman being out, Paolo left a card, on which he wrote his wish to see him.

The confession, withheld by Paolo from Salvator, was, that of late a coolness had sprung up between him and the realist. Du Genre, being a man who put method in his dissipation, that is, one who made it a point to keep within the limits of his purse, seeing that Paolo, on the contrary, was living beyond his means, had taken upon himself to remonstrate with him repeatedly, and Paolo, too excited to listen to reason, had seen fit to take offence at what he considered an encroachment on his personal independence. Hence a comparative estrangement between the *quondam* inseparables.

Du Genre called on Paolo in the evening, and warm was the greeting he gave to Salvator, whose pre-

sence took him quite by surprise. He evinced none, however, on hearing of Paolo's sudden resolve. "He was prepared for anything and everything," he said, "in that quarter; it wouldn't make him start if he met Paolo on the Boulevards with a tower of Notre Dame under each arm. Always in extremes, eh, Paolo? However, as it must be so, let me tell you that, extreme for extreme, I give my vote for a six months' campaign in the Crimea on short rations, in preference to that infernal gallop — excuse me for calling it so — which you have been keeping up for the last two months."

"You have characterized my life perfectly," said Paolo, good-humouredly; "be charitable enough to help my escape from it," and he proceeded to explain the service he needed. Du Genre took up the matter with all his old cordiality; of course, he would find a witness, twenty witnesses, any number of witnesses, from each and all of the Italian States, including the republic of San Marino, but he must have a little time.

Time was the only thing which Paolo could ill afford, but circumstances laid their bridle on his neck, and forced the curb between his lips. Champ the bit as he would, and scatter forth the foam of his impatience, three whole days he had to wait. Luckily he was not without some imperative occupation.

There was, first, his establishment to break up, and plenty of accounts to settle, but for these more money than time was required. As to the carriage and horses he had been fool enough to buy, Du Genre took charge of them, and would sell them, when a good opportunity occurred. Secondly, there was a duty not to be omitted — the few friends he had so long neglected, to see and take leave of.

Mr. Perrin, Mr. Pertuis, and Mr. Boniface gave the young Roman as hearty a reception, as if his last call had been paid the day before. Perhaps Mr. Boniface, with the good faith of an absent man, fancied such to be the case. Busy people in large cities, be their business speculative or active, are generally apt to overlook the flight of time; even the few exceptions to this rule affect to do so, in order to avoid unnecessary explanations.

On hearing that he was going to Turin — Paolo carefully abstained from breathing a word of the Crimea — both Mr. Perrin and Mr. Pertuis, taking it for granted that he meant to remain there, expressed their approbation of this choice. Sardinia, said Mr. Perrin, was fast becoming the centre of the Italian movement, and it was to be wished that all the scattered energy in the Peninsula should converge to that focus. Mr. Pertuis considered the last bold move of Piedmont in the affair of the Crimea, as a *chef d'œuvre* of statesmanship, and one which might have incalculable consequences. Paolo's heart swelled with joy as he listened to the golden opinions entertained by these talented men, of a country which he was in a manner to adopt as his own, and of a policy in support of which he was going to stake his life.

His visit to the Quai Montebello was reserved as a *bonne bouche* for the last. Prudence was the only one among Paolo's acquaintances, who seemed to have perceived the length of his absence.

"Oh, Mr. Paul!" she exclaimed, "what a stranger you have grown!"

Tears started into Paolo's eyes at this gentle rebuke.

"Would to God I had been less so!" he said,

feelingly; "it would have been better for me and others."

The busy Prosper had had no leisure for recollections; he was as simply overjoyed to see Mr. Paul as the children, who came and established themselves between their former playmate's knees, and needed no urging to empty his pockets of the toys and bonbons, with which they were crammed.

Benoît, telegraphed to from the back window, shuffled in presently, and, what with his astonishment and emotion, could find nothing better to do than to snatch at the famous meerschaum pipe which he wore dagger fashion in his belt, and to cry, as he flourished it, "Here it is." Day was closing in, and Benoît was under the influence of — vapour, as he Jesuitically termed it — a toxicological condition, which added to his pantomimic, what it took from his oratorical, powers.

The party being thus *au complet*, as Prosper professionally observed, kindly inquiries were exchanged, and such bits of information given and elicited *hinc inde*, as Prosper's frequent exits, and the ebb and flow of passengers in and out, allowed. The room in which they were sitting had undergone some repairs; the walls had been freshly papered, and a new and neat stove had taken the place of the old and rickety one. These improvements were pointed out by Prosper with no little pride.

"It is all the doing of the new administration," explained the elated little man "the Compagnie Générale des Omnibus — all capitalists cased in millions — bought up all the lines at an immense outlay; there is

nothing like centralization, you see. Between you and me, an affair of gold, and perfectly respectable."

"Are you better paid?" asked Paolo; "that is the most interesting question for me."

"No; my salary is not raised yet, Mr. Paul; "but we have got a uniform — all our men have — handsome, is it not?" and Prosper drew himself up to his full height, and stood complacently to be looked at. It was only then that Paolo noticed the great fact of Prosper's blue overcoat, with its embroidered collar and cap to match. "Capital cloth; just feel it; smooth as velvet; and the embroidery of real silver; and we have a waterproof cloak for rainy days — here it is."

Paolo approved of the waterproof garment, but demurred as to the uniform. Prosper *mordicus* defended his new acquisition. From the Marshal of France down to the shop porters, he said, every one now-a-days had his uniform.

"It's the men's crinoline," said Prudence, laughing.

"Hang the crinoline!" cried Prosper, with sudden vehemence; "three-quarters of the complaints made to us are caused by that downright abomination. Now, a uniform, thank God, is in nobody's way, and most *comme il faut* it is, isn't it, *mon parrain*?"

At this appeal, *mon parrain*, who, during the debate, had been obstinately puffing at his empty meerschaum with the gravity of a Cherokee chief, got up, made a military salute, and said emphatically, "The uniform is the man, *quoi*?" — too profound a dictum not to settle the question.

After this, Paolo was called on to admire the children's copy-books, and to listen to La Fontaine's "Ant and the Grasshopper," recited by the eldest boy.

When the little ones, praised, caressed, and loaded with gifts, had gone off to bed, Paolo rose and said, —

“And now, my dear friends, I must also be off; I came to say good-bye to you before leaving Paris. I am on the move for Turin.”

This announcement had the most exhilarating effect on the old trooper. He made a feint at Paolo's breast, ejaculating, —

“*Farceur, va* — none of that; ha! ha! ha! Turin! a good joke.”

“Turin!” repeated Prosper, with a lengthened face; “far away, isn't it? I hope you don't mean to settle there for good and all.”

“As to that I can say nothing, my good Prosper; you know that man's decisions are often set aside by circumstances.”

“Because,” continued Prosper, “be it said without meaning to disparage other countries, I have always heard that there is no place for comfort like Paris; only to speak of public conveyances, find me another city where, for instance, you can go as far as from Batignolles to the Jardin des Plantes, a little journey, for six sous.”

Paolo assured him that there were plenty of public conveyances in Turin, and that the fare from one end of the town to the other was only four sous.

“That's very well — very well indeed; but, monsieur, I don't believe Turin covers the ground that Paris does. However, I am glad to hear what you say. Omnibuses speak well for the civilization of a place; but there are omnibuses and omnibuses, you know; and you may take my word for it, there's only one ‘*Compagnie Générale*’ in the world.”

"Will you humour a childish fancy of mine?" whispered Paolo to Prudence. "Just let me have a peep at my old room, will you?"

"Most willingly," said she, lighting a candle, and leading the way.

Benoît saluted their exit with a fresh burst of laughter, and a "well done, old boy!" In what circumstance originated his delusion, that Paolo was joking as to his intention of leaving Paris, was, and must remain one of the unfathomable mysteries of tipsiness. Paolo surveyed the back parlour for a moment; it was empty, cold, and dismal enough, God knows, but even such as it was, full for him of sweet memories, of the sweetest of all those hallowed by disinterested affection. He took Prudence by the hand, and said, —

"I have sought for this moment of privacy to tell you —" there was a knot in his throat which stopped his words; "I want to ask your pardon — yes, your pardon — I ought to ask it on my knees — here, in this place. Don't look as if you did not understand for what. You know, and I know, that I have been ungrateful to you and yours; that I have kept away from you, my benefactress, my kind nurse — paid you back by shameful neglect for the boon of life, that, after God, I owe you. If you can say so truly, say that you forgive me."

"If it must be so," said Prudence, smiling through her tears, "I will say that I forgive you; though I have never felt angry; and that I bless you, dear Mr. Paul, with all my heart. And now, let me explain one thing. If I receive the news of your departure just now with seeming coolness, don't believe that it was from indifference, or resentment, indeed, it was neither. The

truth is I was prepared for it. The moment you came in, I was sure you had come to say good-bye. I was sorry for myself, but glad for you; it is for your good, I know. You look pale and thin, not like what you were when you were writing for Mr. Boniface. You don't look happy." (Paolo here raised his eyes to the ceiling, in a way highly confirmatory of Prudence's hint.) "Will you let me give you a good recipe for happiness? I am but a poor uneducated woman, but women have good guesses about some things. Find out some nice young lady to love, and who will love you, and marry her, though she were a born princess."

"Suppose," said Paolo, won by this maternal affection to sudden confidence, "suppose the lady were already found, and that I feel myself to be unworthy of her."

"Fiddlesticks!" cried Prudence, with a laugh; "it's well enough to be modest, but too much of anything is bad. I am glad, at all events, that you are on the right track; it will come all right at last."

"Is there nothing in the world I can do for you?" asked Paolo, almost imploringly.

"Not in the way you mean," was Prudence's quick answer; "we are very comfortable indeed; but if not too inconvenient perhaps you will let us hear of you now and then."

Paolo promised, took her in his arms, kissed her, and left the room.

"Adieu, Prosper, adieu, *mon vieux*, God bless you all." And with another shake of the two men's hands, he was gone.

Good tidings were awaiting him in the Chaussée d'Antin. Du Genre had called, and left word with

Salvator that he had found the required witness, who would be at the Sardinian Consulate the next day at noon. No fear but that Paolo was punctual to the hour of rendezvous. Everything went as smooth as oil, and by three o'clock Paolo was the legitimate possessor of a regular passport, duly *viséd* by the French police into the bargain. He and Salvator accordingly fixed to take their departure by that evening's express train for Lyons.

Clothes, books, boots were tossed into trunks and portmanteaus, which were no sooner filled than sent off to the terminus, Du Genre making merry the while at Paolo's expense. Paolo was in such dread of missing the train, that they reached the *débarcadere* exactly two hours too soon — considering which, and that none of the three had dined, they with common consent sought the refreshment room, and ordered dinner.

Du Genre ate little, but, contrary to his custom, drank freely, talked rather more than usual, and was more outrageously paradoxical than ever.

"An Italy independent and free!" quoth the realist, tossing off a glass of Champagne in response to a toast of Salvator's to that effect. "You speak of it at your ease, my dear friends, without giving a thought to the consequences. 'To digest or not to digest,' that is the European question involved in the Italian one; and what if I prove to you that the *status quo* of Italy is the *sine quâ non* of a good digestion for nine-tenths of Europe! Make the least attempt at change, and jaundice will be the order of the day. You ask for evidence, ye hard of understanding! Just handle, gently as a zephyr plays with a rose, the Roman question — and to be free, touch it you must — and two hundred mil-

lions of Catholics soon find their gastric juices impaired. Just give a wink to the *Italian* Tyrol — and wink in that direction you must, or no independence for you — and dyspepsia seizes on more than forty millions of your fellow-creatures, whose gospel it is — not the Gospel of Christ, though — that the saurkrautian element was *ab aeterno* destined to lord it over the macaronian element. To come down from the wholesale to the retail. Suppress that providential Italian issue, and no class, no individual but will sorely suffer from the revulsion. Publicists, statisticians, journalists will be deprived of their richest mine of speculation, philanthropists of their favourite *dada*, parliamentary orators of their cue for indignation speeches, poets of their camposanto, over which to sing everlasting requiems, fair readers of *Le mie Prigioni* as a safety-valve for working off their surplus of sensibility; and, to sum up all, the mass of nonentities whom God has blessed with a country, will sadly miss a point of comparison, which tends greatly to their self-glorification. So that, you must see, every one will be the worse for the change, and none the better — no, not even the Italians. I anticipated the objection. You will be the first to suffer, and *probo*. What is it that gives breadth and elevation to the Italian character, and wins favour for it? It is the immateriality of their pursuit, and the spirit of sacrifice they carry into it. Amidst the hard race after material interests and enjoyments which characterizes the present age, and lowers all individuals to the same level, no one can help respecting and sympathizing with people original enough to stake everything, life included, on something that is not tangible, not visible — for an idea. Commonplace as we may have become

ourselves, we are still tickled by originality in others. Well, now for this state of things you are indebted to Austria. Remove the cause, and you remove the effect; make an Italy independent, free and happy, and farewell spiritual ballast, farewell poetry, and originality; you fall to the ground flat and uninteresting as an exhausted balloon; in fact, you are like the rest of the world, worthy of revolving — *dignus intrare* — in the commonplace orbit, which is to speculate in railways or the funds, get rich, in short, and *prendre du ventre*."

Men are too often ashamed of appearing as good as they are. All the farrage of nonsense just delivered by Du Genre had no other object than to cover the depths of an emotion much to his credit, and which, do what he would to check it, still would assert itself in his looks and words at parting.

"Farewell, dear Salvator, farewell, dear Telemachus, and *sans rancune*, I trust. If I gave you cause of complaint, and probably I did, my judgment was the guilty party, and not my heart; believe me, old fellow, I have got a heart in spite of appearances, and the day this weary Italian question is fairly put, directly and not by *ricochet* — well, never mind the rest. Perhaps after all you are right; but right or wrong, remember I value your friendship, and am always at your service. Write sometimes, and now, *Partant pour la Syrie*, and *à revoir*."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Salvator wins the Day.

DOWN to Lyons and Chambéry with the speed of an arrow, and up the Mont Cenis, grand, solemn, snow-clad Mont Cenis. Paolo had never before seen the Alps, he had tried often and often to realize them from description; but what powers of imagination can approach such stupendous reality? Paolo felt the presence of God in His works, and adored.

The day was cold and clear, and the old fir-trees, covered all over with frost, sparkled in the sun like gigantic Venetian chandeliers. To lose none of the sublime harmonies of the spectacle, Paolo made the whole ascent on foot, revelling in that glorious sensation of having, as it were, no body, and being wafted along on wings. Salvator's stumpy legs did good service in their way, for, with the exception of two short lifts, he kept by his tall companion's side.

And thus the summit was reached; and lo! deep down below, running at first within narrow defiles, but quickly expanding as it stretched onwards, lay the valley of Susa — and Susa itself, that brown speck in the distance. "Behold her, Salvator," cried Paolo.

"Italy for ever!" shouted the little man, and for the first time since heaven knows how long, he sung forth a quotation, even more appropriate than usual to the occasion. *Ah! del cielo e della terra, Bella Italia sei l'onor.*

This passage of the Mont Cenis, Paolo affirms to this day, did more to tune his soul once more up to

an harmonious diapason, than all the books of all the moralists put together. Lucky that it was so, for delays and disappointments were in wait for him at Turin. From every quarter the two young Romans received the unpalatable intelligence, that no volunteers were admitted into the Piedmontese expeditionary corps, but such as had served already, and could prove their services. There was, it is true, in course of formation a foreign legion for the service of England, in which recruits were received without any similar condition, and probably Salvator had confounded this with the Piedmontese corps. The ardent little fellow, however, in no wise daunted, went to some of the deputies, whom he had come across in his first visit to the Sardinian capital, and upon this slender thread of acquaintance-ship, he did manage to make his way, and obtain a letter of introduction for a high official in the war office; but nothing came of it but a confirmation of the fact, that he and his friend were ineligible for service in the Crimea. "Even you yourself will, I am sure, acknowledge the necessity for strictness on this point," wound up the man in office, with a consoling show of sympathy for the disappointment he was inflicting. "We are about to confront a formidable military power, and that, under the eyes of the two best armies in Europe; the honour of our country is doubly at stake, and we should be inexcusable, did we trust that to other than tried men."

No bad reasoning, thought to himself the unsuccessful suitor, as he went down the stairs, not the less provoking to me and Paolo, though. I suppose it's no use trying so see the minister himself, of course they have settled one and all to sing the same song. But

if I could get to the top of the tree — to the king — he might help one. Full of this new idea, he turned mechanically to the right, and was roused from his meditation by perceiving the royal palace right before him. The iron gates being always wide open, Salvator walked into the spacious court, and looked long at the king's dwelling. There must be some solace in gazing at the windows of those who can influence our destinies. Lovers, for instance, are never tired of a mute contemplation of those of their beloved ones.

An officer of the National Guard, seemingly on duty, was pacing up and down before the palace. He had an open, communicative countenance. Salvator directed his own steps so as to approach the officer without appearance of design.

"A fine building," exclaimed the landscape painter.

"No doubt," replied the officer. "Excuse me, but you seem to be a stranger to Turin."

"Yes, indeed, I am a Roman," answered Salvator. "Are travellers allowed to see the interior of the palace?"

"Not when his Majesty is there, as is the case at this moment. After all, one must not grudge kings a little privacy."

"I am not the man to grudge Victor Emmanuel anything," retorted Salvator, briskly. After a little pause, he added: "Pray, is his majesty difficult of access?"

The Piedmontese smiled with a certain pride as he said, —

"The palace you are looking at, sir, is not Schönbrunn. Our king is not afraid to see anyone; if you want to have an audience, all you have to do is to

forward a request in writing, stating the object you have in view, and get your ambassador's signature—"

"To tell the truth," interrupted Salvator, "I don't think myself entitled to ask to see his majesty on what is only an affair of consequence to myself; still I should like to have a peep of *Il Rè Galantuomo*, and liberty to say a dozen words to him."

"Then, why not accost him in the street?" suggested the officer. "He will not take it amiss."

"If I only knew when and where," cried Salvator, eagerly.

"That's easily discovered," said the obliging citizen-soldier. "You see that archway to the left of this court; go through it — you'll find a church on your right, skirt its walls till you come to a lane that runs behind it. On that side of the lane which adjoins the palace, several back-doors open. Through one or other of those private doors the king makes his exit almost daily between two and three o'clock in the afternoon. Mount guard there, and it's ten to one but that you will have your wish. But beware of looking alarmed or stammering when you address his majesty; nothing he dislikes more than timidity or slowness."

Salvator was so elated at the chance thus pointed out to him, that, had he followed his first impulse, he would have thrown himself, in a transport of gratitude, on the neck of his obliging informant; but, on second thoughts, he was wise enough to content himself with expressing his thanks in a Roman accent, that sounded like soft music in answer to the sharp, snipped words of his north countryman. Through the archway, round the church, and he was in the lane blessed with the

palace back-doors, in less time than it takes to record his movements.

Ha! ha! friend Salvator, thinks he to himself, here is a famous chance for yon, if you know how to use it; lucky that you are in a fit condition to appear before any potentate. (The reader has perhaps forgotten that, since his elevation to the post of scene-painter, director of choruses, and prompter in ordinary to her ladyship Delfuego y Arcos, Salvator had adopted a rigorous dress suit of black, with white cravat, and frilled shirt.) Yes, a famous chance; provided the king comes, though. As to nervousness and stammering, and all that sort of thing, we'll try to scare his majesty as little as possible in that way.

In spite of this assurance, however, Salvator felt somewhat disturbed, as testified by the dialogue he was carrying on with himself aloud; a fact no sooner perceived than checked by a resolute, "None of that, sir," and humming a tune, he fell to examining the locality, with an eye to the back-doors all the while.

It had wanted a quarter to two when he took his position in the lane. Two o'clock struck. All the clocks in Turin seemed to have a rendezvous over his head — a quarter-past two, half-past two, and no arrival, save that of a shower of rain, short but heavy, which wet him to the skin. A quarter to three — three. Poor Salvator began to shake in his shoes. Either the king had gone out earlier than usual, or was not going out at all. Scarcely, however, had he come to this dispiriting conclusion, when one of the long-watched back-doors opened, and two figures issued from it. Both gentlemen were in plain clothes, but in the foremost Salvator immediately recognized the king, and to re-

cognize and see the king bear down on him with a firm rapid step was one and the same thing.

Salvator drew back, and had to be quick as lightning in taking off his hat — and raising his hand in military fashion to his forehead, he stood stiff as a poker, ready to take advantage of the slightest notice. Attracted by the soldierly salute, his majesty stopped, and with a half smile at the queer figure with such eager eyes fixed on himself, asked,

“Have you anything to say?”

“Please your majesty,” was the prompt answer, “we are two Romans, who have come all the way from Paris to enlist for the Crimea.”

“For the Crimea? Are you big enough?” asked the king, glancing sharply at the little painter.

“Just the right size for a Bersagliere, please your majesty. My friend is as strong and as tall as a tower; we have both smelt gunpowder already, please your majesty.”

“Where?” inquired the king.

“At the siege of Rome in 1849.”

“What puts it into your head to go to the Crimea?”

“The wish to qualify ourselves for your next campaign in Lombardy, sire.”

His majesty turned with a pleased smile to the gentleman accompanying him, then addressing Salvator:

“And suppose you are killed in the Crimea?”

“If so, *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, sire.”

“Bravo,” cried the king, “good Latin, and good sense. What is your name? where are you to be found?”

"Angelo Gigli, sire, at your service, and just now at the Locanda of the Dogana Vecchia."

"Addio," said the king, and raising a finger to his hat, he passed on. Salvator had maintained his military attitude throughout the short dialogue, nor indeed did he relinquish it till the king was fairly out of sight.

"But," objected Paolo, when the particulars of this meeting with the king were related to him, "you were wrong in mentioning two volunteers, you know that I go alone."

"See if you do," quoth Salvator.

"Surely you don't mean to go with me," urged Paolo.

"See if I don't," quoth Salvator.

"And Clelia?" pleaded Paolo.

"Clelia will have to wait till Sebastopol is taken, that's all," said poor Salvator, with very assumed glee.

"And suppose any — misfortune happens to you?"

"Just what his majesty graciously thought possible also, forgetting that misfortunes and cannon-balls prefer the great; besides," continued Salvator, with great gravity, "to satisfy you, I promise I'll duck down when I hear a whiz. My good Paolo, why grudge a little chap a few laurels to add to his height? But what's the use of talking? let us sing instead —

"Se uniti negli affari,
Noi fummo sempre insieme," &c.

Early next morning a young officer came to the Locanda of the Dogana Vecchia to inquire for Signor Angelo Gigli. He was aide-de-camp to F —, a general, who distinguished himself in the campaigns of 1848

and 1849, and was now named to a high command in the Crimean expedition.

The king had taken such a fancy to the spirited young fellow, who spoke with so much assurance of a campaign in Lombardy, that he had requested General F —, the gentleman in attendance, to see what could be done for the would-be volunteer and his friend, and General F — had in his turn deputed his aide-de-camp to fulfil that duty.

“His majesty having expressed a wish favourable to you,” continued the aide-de-camp, “of course my instructions are, that short of some insuperable disqualification, your services should be accepted. Signor Gigli is rather short, I must say, but active and supple, and will do for a sharpshooter. As to Signor —”

“Mancini,” suggested Paolo.

“Signor Mancini will make a capital grenadier. Gentlemen, you are of right good stuff; but drill, hard constant drill, is necessary to make your good qualities of service. Having thus reassured you, permit me for a moment to play the part, as it is called, of the devil’s advocate, and advise you to pause and consider well, before you take an irrevocable step. A soldier’s life in the field is not the poetic thing enthusiastic youths are apt to imagine it; on the contrary, it is a terribly matter-of-fact business, with drawbacks innumerable. I don’t allude to the mere common hardships of cold, rain, or broiling sun, of hunger and thirst — of days of exhausting fatigue, followed by sleepless nights — nor yet of sickness and the chances of wounds or death. But I speak of the hope deferred, that makes the heart sick, of the perpetual annihilation of all independent action, all independent judgment, of all individuality —

a positive torture to gifted minds. I speak of the maddening *ennui* of weeks and months of inaction, and which makes a soldier's life a life of unparalleled trial. Does such a picture tempt you?"

Paolo and Salvator declared that their resolution was not to be shaken.

"So much the better for the service," cried the officer, rising and shaking both by the hand. "The aide-de-camp has done his duty, now allow the volunteer of 1848 to congratulate you on your decision. Not that the picture I drew was exaggerated, far from it; but that I see that you have the true patriotic feeling, up to any sacrifice. *Ad augusta per angusta*. I was made a soldier by circumstances myself. I was preparing for the bar in 1848. I abandoned my profession, because I believed my country needed my arm. I enlisted — and would do so again, though I have gone through all that I have described to you. I even think my sufferings have ended by endearing a soldier's life to me. May it be so with you!"

Having now the certitude of being sent to the Crimea, Paolo on the morrow went to a public notary, and made his will. It was of the simplest; he left everything he possessed in the world to his dear and faithful friend, Angelo Gigli, and in the event of his death, then to Clelia Mauri, both of Rome. A few days after, Paolo entered the first regiment of the second infantry brigade, under the command of General Trotti, and Salvator the second battalion of Lamar-mora's rifles. A whole month elapsed between the day of their enlistment, and that of their embarkation — a month of drill, and nothing but drill, and during which the friends consequently could see but little of one another.

Their voyage was made in different transports, and once at their destination, their chances of meeting were of the smallest, the corps to which they respectively belonged occupying the two opposite extremities of the Sardinian camp. But, as luck would have it, towards the end of June, the second brigade was transferred to the centre, and the difficulty of getting a peep of each other diminished in direct ratio with the diminished distance between their divisions.

Our concern being neither with the Crimean war, nor with the part played in it by the Piedmontese Contingent — both by this time matters of history, the streamlet of our narrative keeps clear of such mighty waters to remain constant to the humble track of Paolo's and Salvator's fortunes. These were neither stirring nor brilliant, and may be disposed of in very few words. We have, however, before doing so, a duty to discharge towards the reader, whom we suppose impatient to learn whether Paolo's new life has produced a change for 'the better in his morbidly gloomy mental perspective.

Paolo, let us hasten to state, was already cured before he landed in the Crimea — cured, we mean, of the obsession which had haunted him in Paris. Though ready to die for his country, he was reconciled to life — nay, more than that, deeply penitent for having despised that boon, and of having contemplated, even for a moment, the throwing of it aside as a burden. Physical and moral agencies, change of scene, bodily exertion, the stir of patriotic passions around him, the new elevating aim offered to his activity, the sense of his own usefulness. had one and all helped to bring about this result. Yet it must not be

supposed that he had learned to view, with more indulgence than formerly, his late follies — no such thing — his abhorrence of them continued unabated, not so his utter hopelessness of ever being able to redeem those errors. They seemed so far away, too, those ill-omened days of Paris — while, by an opposite play of mental optics, other times, other images and scenes, of a far more distant date, seemed things of yesterday; for instance, that charming first interview with Lavinia in his studio, in Via Frattina — he heard again and again the soft rustling like summer air among the trees, which heralded her approach — again and again he was sensible of those ambrosial odours which ever floated around her; every graceful kind word or action of that happy lunch at the Palazzo Morlacchi, was again vividly before him, he saw her again, as he had seen and believed her then, the good genius of her uncle's household; and constant, more than all, was the living remembrance of their leave-taking at Rome; of the touching earnestness of her repentance, and the unconditional surrender of her own will to his, which had sealed the renewal of their former engagement.

On these crumbs of the past Paolo's soul fed, and thrived; but not on them alone. It had besides a substantial honeycomb to feast upon — her last letter. He guarded it as he would have done "the instrumental parts of his religion." He had folded it carefully in soft paper, and carried it in his bosom, close to his heart, that, should he die, it might be buried with him. Knowing it thoroughly by heart, he still read it over and over again, and on many a dark, lonely night, had recited to himself its contents, finding in it a talisman against heavy thoughts. Does any one call this child-

like infatuation? Childlike perhaps, but not the less attended with positive and beneficial results; for out of the few data in that letter, Paolo was reconstructing inch by inch his spiritual world — a Lavinia hallowed by adversity, his own love purified by humility — and withal all the lofty aspirations which refine and exalt human nature. Was this nothing?

And now to leave these poetical heights for the flat level of matter-of-fact every-day life. Dull, dreary and trying enough was that of our two cidevant painters in their quarters on the Tchernaya.

The Piedmontese Contingent were paying to the deadly climate of the Crimea a heavy tribute. Sickness and death in their most repulsive shapes put out of question for a time all active operations on their part, and many a gallant fellow had much to do to bear up against the disheartening effects of the awful visitation, and the relative idleness and want of excitement consequent upon it. We say "relative idleness," for, of course, there was more than enough of mounting guard, of patrolling, and picketing, and raising of *épaulements* for the able-bodied; but these occupations, though affording a temporary relief, had too little of excitement in them, to counteract the gloom which hung over the sick camp.

Our two volunteers stood the ordeal bravely, and without flinching; no small praise, if it be true that —

"It is the detail of blank interval,
The patient sufferance where no action is,
That proves our nature. Many are who act,
But, oh, how few endure!"

Paolo and his little friend did more than endure, they helped and encouraged. Now it was that Salvator's

comic powers, and large stock of quotations from his peculiar and favourite literature, proved of real practical use in cheering many a desponding heart. Nor was he chary of his talents, though his blanched cheeks of late were in pathetic contrast to his fun and drollery.

For, even Salvator's inexhaustible flow of spirits was no buckler against the grasp of disease. One Sunday, the last of the month of July, he was absent at the church parade. To Paolo's anxious inquiries after his friend, the reply was that "the little Roman" had been taken ill and carried to the hospital marquee.

For obvious reasons, access to the temporary hospital of the Sardinians, was interdicted to all but those having official business there, and Paolo could get no admission ticket. However, through the kind offices of General F—'s aide-de-camp — the same who had come to the Locanda of the Dogana Vecchia in Turin, and who had shown constant kindness to his *protégés* during the campaign, Mancini received news of Salvator, which relieved his worst fears. His complaint, according to the physicians, was not one attended by dangerous symptoms; an intermittent fever, such as he had had once before at Rome, likely to be long and tedious, but not putting life in jeopardy. This *prima facie* view of Salvator's case was confirmed later, when at the end of the first week in August, the expectation of an attack by the allies on the tower of Malakoff, caused all the hospitals in camp to be cleared out, and Paolo further learned to his great satisfaction, that his sick friend had been transferred to Balaklava, from whence, as soon as it could be done with safety, he would be conveyed to the hospital of Scutari.

To prevent all false alarms or possible misconceptions, which Salvator's prolonged silence might entail on Clelia, Paolo thought it best to apprise her at once of the real state of affairs, by a letter which also contained a cheque for a considerable amount of scudi. By the same post, he wrote, as he had promised, to Prudence, informing her of his being, for the present, a soldier, and enlarging on the gallantry and the sociability of her own countrymen in the Crimea.

The next salient point in Paolo's Crimean life, was a reconnaissance made by the Sardinians on the 13th of August, and the most lively anticipations of which were unfortunately frustrated. The expeditionary corps swept over the plateau on the other side of the Tchernaya, and to the banks of the Tchontion, without finding a trace of the enemy.

The 16th of August dawned at last, a day which was to be one of hard but glorious work for the allies, and in which the Piedmontese were to have their share of hardship and glory.

At the break of day, the line of the Tchernaya was attacked in gallant style by the Russians, who, after a momentary success, and not without a most obstinate struggle, were finally thrown back with great loss. This battle of the Tchernaya, according to competent judges, sealed the fate of Sebastopol. Paolo had the good luck to be one of the division Trotti, which was engaged in the action; nay, to belong to the very battalion which was sent to harass the retreat of the enemy. Mancini did not at one stroke run his lance through half-a-dozen Russians — by-the-by, he had no lance — nor did he achieve any other supernatural feat in the knight-errantry line; but his

behaviour throughout was steady and resolute enough to be noticed by the men and officers of his company. The greater their pity when they saw him stagger, reel, and fall to the ground. It was the last discharge but one of the retreating artillery which had done the deed.

CHAPTER XXV.

Beneficial Catastrophe.

IT is now high time to return to Paris, and see what has been going on at Dr. Ternel's sanitary establishment. Miss Clara's pen has been busily at work during this interval, and her letters to Owlcombe and Scutari, if textually given, would fill a goodsized volume, which would raise the number of our volumes to four. Now, it being against rule for a fashionable novel, such as this professes to be, to go beyond the sacred figure of three, we shall take the liberty of squeezing out of Miss Clara's correspondence all the facts of any importance, and offering the summary to the reader.

Dr. Ternel having done all in his power by word of mouth, to arouse in his English patient an understanding of the reality preparing for him, at length thought the moment had come for taking a step further in the same direction. Accordingly, one fine morning, a letter directed to himself was put into Mr. Thornton's hand — a letter dated from Owlcombe, bearing the Warcham post-mark, written in Miss Clara's well-known hand, and signed with her name in full. She wrote that she had heard of his being in Paris in the Rue

St. Dominique, and that, being now in possession of his address, she had instantly determined on going to see her old friend. Would he not be glad to see her?

The doctor anxiously watched the effect of this letter: rather to his surprise, it was one far from satisfactory. Thornton looked thoughtful, was much absorbed after its perusal; talked a good deal to himself, but never spoke to the doctor. Mr. Ternel had to break the ice himself.

"Well," he began, cheerfully, "you have received good news, I know. Miss Clara is already on her way hither."

"How came you to know that?" asked Mortimer, after pondering awhile.

"I have a letter from her also. See, here it is," and the doctor produced it.

Thornton looked at it, then said sternly, —

"It is all a hoax; since when have the dead taken to writing?"

"But Miss Clara is not dead — that is a mere morbid fancy of yours. Miss Clara is full of life and energy and affection for her dear old friend."

Thornton shook his head despondingly.

"Who ought to know better than I, who am her murderer?"

"I hold in my hand a plain undeniable proof that you are mistaken," urged the doctor, tapping her letter. "You are quite right in saying that dead persons cannot write — now Miss Clara does write, you know her writing."

"Once upon a time I did," said the unfortunate Englishman; "but who can tell? hands are so easily

counterfeited. Have you ever advertised for a missing friend?"

"Never," replied the doctor.

"Well then, do so; and you'll see what comes of it. There are plenty of people who trade in heartless hoaxes. When the steamship *President* was lost, there was no end of such. I have had experience, for I was taken in myself," and he went on to relate his trip to Havre, and his cruel disappointment.

No reasoning, no appeals from the doctor could undo this new twist of his patient's mind. It would be unsafe to venture on a more tangible proof of his error. Better wait for a favourable change of mood — such was the doctor's decision.

"We must not risk too hastily our last, our only chance," he said to Miss Clara. "Though the best-matured plan may fail, yet let us at least do all that humanly can be done, to have the odds on our side."

The first failure had not caused the indefatigable doctor to relax in his activity, he only varied the means to his end. What the sight of Miss Clara's handwriting had failed to do, perhaps her voice, that most powerful of instruments to strike home to the heart, might accomplish, especially if connected with old associations. In furtherance of this plan, Dr. Ternel had a piano put in a small room at the back of the establishment, adjoining his own study, and the only window of which looked into the park. In this species of light closet Miss Clara spent many anxious hours, recollecting and practising those tunes and songs, which she thought would most powerfully recall old times to Mortimer.

The doctor, on his side, undertook to persuade his patient to go out, and enjoy the sight of the first com-

ing into leaf of the trees. Thornton's servant having already received instructions to take his master to the particular spot, which it was desirable he should visit. It was long before Mortimer could be prevailed upon to comply with the doctor's wish. Inclined at all times to be sedentary and solitary, he had grown still more so of late. One day, however, when it was least expected, out he went, and following on the steps of the servant, came under the closet window. A short prelude of chords, followed by Weber's *Dernière Pensée*, rooted him to the spot. He looked up to the window from whence the sound proceeded, and listened intently. The doctor from behind the blind studied the play of Thornton's physiognomy with intense interest. He desired Miss Clara to sing, and she began at once.

The effect of her voice was instantaneous upon the eager listener. He stared violently, clasped his hands together, and his eyes filled with tears.

"Now or never," whispered Dr. Ternel in great excitement; "sing on, sing on, I'll bring him here at once. Courage!"

It took him but a minute to run down the stairs, and round the house to Thornton; but in that minute there had been time enough for a change. When the doctor came up to him, Thornton's brow was lowering, and his eye fixed on the ground.

"Miss Clara is there," said Doctor Ternel, pointing to the window above their heads.

Thornton looked up with a glance full of suspicion.

"She is singing for you," went on the physician; "you will go to her, will you not?"

Thornton slunk back in silence.

"Why don't you wish to see Miss Clara, your dear old friend?"

Thornton vehemently shook his head; without speaking a word recoiled still farther, and ended by hurrying away altogether.

Tears started into the good doctor's eyes at having to return alone to the anxious young lady, with news of this second discomfiture. Had Thornton's mood, at first hearing her voice, but lasted a few minutes longer, there was no saying what might have been the result. Cruel, cruel, indeed, to founder in sight of port. But what was delayed was not lost. The doctor had too thorough an experience of the habits of diseased minds, not to feel assured that Thornton would revisit the spot, where he had received so strong an impression. And then the missed opportunity might be found again. With such and other cheering predictions, the sympathizing doctor tried to allay the shock of Miss Clara's disappointment.

This opportunity, however, did not present itself for the next fortnight. Thornton went two or three times into the grounds during that period, but studiously avoided the place to which his servant would have enticed him. Dr. Ternel perceived also that he was more agitated, and his thoughts more disordered than before the last experiment.

One afternoon Miss Clara was sitting at the piano — it was a lovely, mild April day — and as her eyes rested on the bright tender green of the trees opposite, her fingers wandered half-unconsciously over the keys. All of a sudden she felt she was no longer alone. A figure was standing on her right, too tall to be Dr. Ternel; surely then it must be Thornton. Startled

beyond all conception as she was, she had been too well warned and instructed by the doctor as to what was chiefly to be avoided in a like emergency, to show her agitation. She accordingly continued to strike the keys, striving the while to regain full self-control; at last, she gently turned towards him, and said, —

“Is that you, Mortimer; how do you do?” and without rising, she held out her hand to him.

He did not take it, but examined her face calmly enough, though with a shade of timidity.

“Shall I sing *Queen Mab* to you?” resumed Clara. “It used to be a great favourite of yours at Owlscombe; you recollect it, don’t you?”

He did not answer the question, but, as if pondering, still gazed at her. At last he exclaimed, —

“Where can the other be, I wonder?”

“The other who?” said she, rising cautiously. “There is only one Clara, you know — your Clara. Won’t you shake hands with her?”

She bent forwards a little as she spoke.

He looked pleased, and smiled, hesitated if he should take the proffered hand or not, then, with a childlike gesture, touched it rapidly, but immediately drew back his own, muttering to himself, with down-cast eyes, —

“How can it be?”

Clara approached him softly, took both his hands in hers, and plunging her eyes into his, said, —

“Clara, your Clara.”

Thus they stood, perhaps, ten seconds, hand in hand, face to face. To his had returned full consciousness, but a change speedily came over it. As waters touched by a sunbeam, when a cloud intervenes, lose their

transparency, and in a twinkling become livid, so did Thornton's countenance lose all its limpidity, and grew at once grey and haggard.

"Don't touch my hand," he cried, "it is cursed; it is the hand of a murderer," and he struggled to disengage himself from her grasp. She strove to maintain her hold, trying at the same time to soothe and pacify him with gentle loving words. To no avail. Just as, in the pitiable contest, they had unwittingly got near to the open window, a man dashed noisily into the room.

This proved more than sufficient to heighten Thornton's excitement into positive madness. "The avenger, the avenger!" he shouted, and, shaking off Miss Clara violently, in another moment he had flung himself out of the window. A double scream rent the air; she looked out, saw a motionless form lying on the ground; saw a red stream flow from under it, and fell back senseless.

The person, whose sudden entrance had brought about this frightful catastrophe, was Thornton's servant, who, on missing his master, had first searched the grounds, and not finding him there, had next gone to report his disappearance to Dr. Ternel. Unluckily, the doctor was not in his study, and the man becoming sensible that some sort of scuffle was taking place in the next room, had hurried in; with what result, we know.

He immediately raised an alarm, that speedily brought half the household to the spot, Dr. Ternel among the rest. Consigning Miss Clara, now in violent hysterics, to the care of one of his assistants, the doctor, ashy pale but collected, hastened to see what could be

done for the more serious case. Thornton was carried with all speed to his own room, and upon examination it was found, that, beside many relatively unimportant injuries, his right thigh was broken. The fracture was instantly and successfully reduced, and stimulants administered; every resource of art, however, failed to restore the sufferer to consciousness. The day wore on, night came, and another day dawned, and still Thornton lay insensible, and but for his fainting, fluttering pulse, might have been supposed dead.

Great was the doctor's dread of a concussion of the brain, beyond the power of mortal skill to cure; but this dread he kept locked within his breast, while, under his own superintendence, every known remedy was unflinchingly persevered in; not a moment's rest did he take, only leaving Thornton's sick bed to bring words of encouragement to Miss Clara, lying in a feverish state in the room of one of the needlewomen of the establishment. Dr. Ternel, by turns physician and comforter, wrestled valiantly with both bodily and mental sufferings.

About noon of the day following that of the dire event, Clara, quite worn out, had fallen into a sleep, when the doctor entered her room. He looked greatly excited, and was evidently struggling for self-command. It often happens that the men most hardened to painful emotions lose all their power of self-control under the pressure of joy.

"He is dead!" screamed Clara, starting up in her bed, her eyes wide with terror.

"He is alive," shouted the doctor, with elation; "he is conscious — he is —— I am a great fool; prepare yourself for ——"

"Tell me, good doctor — oh! tell me," cried poor Clara.

"Cured! cured!" was all that the doctor managed to say, accompanied by something mightily like a caper. Clara threw up her arms in speechless gratitude, and fell back on her pillow in a paroxysm of tears.

There is no better sedative for overwrought feeling than a good fit of crying; and presently the young lady was calm enough to hear what the doctor had to relate. He told her, that after a twenty hours' application of the strongest stimulants, Thornton had at last revived, and the first thing he had done, was to motion to Dr. Ternel to lean down close to him, and then, in a scarcely audible whisper, had asked, "Where is Clara?"

"I told him," continued Dr. Ternel, "you were in the *lingerie*, and he desired me to come at once, and tell you that, thanks to you, he was cured, and that, if he lived, it would be to bless to the last day of his life, her, who had restored him to reason."

Three days later, Clara was allowed to show herself to her friend; literally but show herself, for it was only under an express condition that she would neither speak nor be spoken to, that Thornton and she were allowed to meet. A useless proviso, after all, for neither could have said a word, so choked were both by tears.

Tears served indeed for all explanation between them — nothing more, not a word, even after all embargo to conversation had been taken off. And when, installed in the sick room, with a female attendant as chaperone, Clara proved herself the most in-

telligent, tender, and devoted of nurses, never did Thornton make any allusion to the past, but it was speedily drowned in their mutual tears.

Thornton, as may easily be believed, was, under the circumstances, the most docile and grateful of patients; he spoke little, though he felt so much; but he murmured over and over again to himself, even in his sleep, "angel, angel," and often asked of some invisible friend what he had done to deserve this bliss of blisses. As to the kind doctor, he looked ten years younger than he had done the previous month, and his white cravat and shirt-frill, at one period rather neglected, shone with all their pristine lustre.

Thus a month went by, and then another, and the sun was warm, and the grounds all decked in green, and the parterres a mass of colour; and Thornton began to hobble about upon his crutches, or rather upon his crutch, for that on the side Miss Clara walked, was superseded by her arm. The sun presently grew almost too hot, and shady walks were preferred, and the wooden crutch disappeared; the other, the soft, slender arm, was always, oh! always there. And save a shade of lameness, which would vanish in time, Mortimer Thornton was, to all intents and purposes, his former self again — that is, his body; for, as to his mind, that had undergone a change indeed, and not for the worse.

With summer's glad time, little projects budded forth, and Mortimer began to feel the expediency of shifting his quarters, and of leaving room in the establishment, to him thrice blessed, for some other more in need of assistance than, thank God, he now was. It was then Miss Clara wrote to Nelly and

George that they were wanted, and George and Nelly set off without delay, and arrived in Paris in the first week of July.

CHAPTER XXVI.

All's well that ends well.

THE scene of this last stage of our journey is the court of the Barrack Hospital at Scutari, in the latter days of September. The court swarms with soldiers in all the varieties of the uniforms of the allied forces in the Crimea — English, French, and Piedmontese — but the British regimentals far predominate. A lamentable sight, including, as it does, every shape of human wreck, which the most lugubriously disposed fancy could evoke, from the poor fellow yonder, who hobbles along minus a frozen foot, to that misshapen bundle of living flesh, with no arms and no legs, that lies upon a bench. Many crawl about with all their limbs, whose wasted frames and cadaverous hues tell even a more pitiful tale than that of their mutilated brethren. Returning health and vigour shine in the looks of a few, but even returning health and vigour are sad here, from the melancholy contrast they offer to decay, past recovery.

Several of the convalescents are walking about, alone, in couples, or standing in little knots; many are seated, conversing or reading; here and there one dictates a letter to a more learned comrade. Occasionally, a female figure dressed in gray, wearing a band across her shoulder, with "Scutari Hospital" embroidered on it, flits through the crowd on some charitable errand;

and the crowd opens before the flitting figure, and all caps are lifted, and grateful glances meet hers, as if she were some gracious queen.

We must single a group out of the motley throng. A handsome young man, very pale, with jet-black hair closely cut, is on his knees before a bench, drawing, on a large sheet of paper. Though there is no wind stirring, his foraging cap lies on one corner of the paper, and a stone on the other, to fix it down. The gray capote of the Piedmontese infantry is thrown loosely over his shoulders, as if it were a cloak, the sleeves dangling empty behind. While drawing, he converses with a fine young woman, grave and dignified looking, in spite of her humble attire, and of her occupation, which just then was that of mending a stocking. Her southern origin is written in unmistakeable characters in her raven hair and eyes and soft olive complexion. A third person takes part now and then in the conversation, and rarely without producing an exhilarating effect. This third person is a little fellow in the short gray cloak of the Sardinian Bersaglieri, and the longest and most ludicrous of striped cotton caps, the tassel of which bobs perpetually back and forward, in obedience to the quick and never-ceasing jerks and twists of its owner's head. The business of this little Bersagliere seems to be to march round and round the bench, brandishing a long stick, and singing whenever not speaking —

“Su, da bravi, figliuoli, coraggio,
Che fra i sassi s' arriva alla gloria.”

“Yes,” said Clelia, “it is as I told you. He came on board our steamer at Leghorn, he was bent on reaching Balaklava.”

"This beats all his past tricks," said Paolo, laughing. "Count Fortiguerra turned Polish nobleman — an exile of course, and singing to the guitar."

"And a very good affair he made of it, I assure you," continued Clelia; "copper, and even silver, rained into his begging plate. He has an excellent barytone voice, I must say, and he manages it well."

"A rival for you, Salvator," cried Paolo; "I'll bet you anything he makes his way to Scutari one of these days."

"If he does," said Salvator, "I'll take care to make him go back faster than he came."

"Mere professional rivalry," quoth Paolo. "The *primo tenor assoluto* is jealous of the barytone."

"Pray, Salvator, may we ask what this infallible charm is for getting rid of him?" said Clelia.

"The unmasking him, of course."

"Even if you wished to do so — which I much doubt if you once saw him," said Clelia, quietly; "poor fellow he is old, and sadly out at elbows — well, if you had all the will in the world, I doubt, Salvator, your power to get the better of Count Fortiguerra, or whatever he may now call himself. He is a consummate actor, and personates any character he assumes to the very life. To see him in his square Polish cap, and surtout all bebraided with loops and frogs, a white tuft on his chin, and large white moustaches, to hear him talking of the campaign of 1830, — impossible not to believe him to be one of the noble relics of the heroes of Ostrolenka. Not a soul on board the steamer — and some Poles were there — ever doubted for a moment his assumed nationality and story; and whoever

had ventured to impeach the old rogue, would have fared ill, I assure you."

"Impudence, I perceive, is the safest capital in this world," observed Mancini. "Did you find out whether he recollected you?"

"That he did," answered Clelia; "one day I spoke to him in Italian, and there was a full admission in the roguish wink that accompanied his reply, '*Parlare Italiano molto giovinetto, vecchio scordato tutto quanto.*'"

"You saw nothing of his Achates, the chevalier?"

Before Clelia could reply to Paolo's question, Salvatore, in a startled tone, exclaimed, —

"By the Capitol, a younger brother of Mentor, I declare."

Paolo turned round, and saw a tall man in plain clothes striding across the court, on his way out.

"By heaven, it is himself," cried Paolo, jumping up, and darting after the retreating figure.

At the sound of his name, Thornton looked back, put up his eye-glass, and with the exclamation, "God be praised!" hurried towards Paolo. "Now then, I am indeed happy," added Thornton, pressing the young man's right hand within both his own.

Paolo fixed a long, eager, inquiring look on his benefactor. Changed, radically changed, the expression of his face, the tones of his voice — Thornton, indeed, but surely not the Thornton of Rome.

"Thank God, I see you so well — better than I ever hoped to see you!" said Paolo, with emotion.

"Happiness, Paolo, happiness has been the great magician. Yes, indeed, many things are altered since we parted, and I have been more lucky than I deserved. You see in me a man restored to health of

mind and body, to a sound appreciation of men and things — a man made happy, in short, by love — the love of an angel, she whom I had most wronged. But let us not talk of me just now; tell me how it is you are here — what became of you in Paris — tell me."

"Come and sit down a moment," said Paolo, pointing to the bench where he had left Clelia and Salvator; "there are some more of your friends from Rome here."

"How glad my wife will be!" said Thornton.

"Your wife!"

"Did I not tell you I had an angel to take care of me? Lavinia is here too, Paolo."

"Lavinia?" gasped forth Mancini.

"Ay, indeed; she makes one of our family for the present. Oh, Paolo! merciful heavens! what is this?" cried Thornton suddenly, stopping short, his every feature working with emotion.

Thornton, in mentioning Lavinia, had affectionately put forth his hand to take hold of Paolo's left arm, when he suddenly discovered that there was none there.

"One of the many chances of war," said Paolo, with a quiet smile; "I am thankful it is the left and not the right."

"Oh, my noble boy!" exclaimed Mortimer, clasping Paolo to his bosom, and, all English as he was, and used to control his feelings, he burst fairly into a fit of crying.

Clelia and Salvator now approached, and greetings were exchanged. Too moved to say much, Thornton made up by warmth of manner for deficiency of speech. They all sat on a bench, and before everything else,

Paolo had to give a very minute account of all that related to his wound, and consequent amputation. This was followed by a short summary of what had befallen him since his separation from Thornton; nor did he spare himself when he got on the chapter of his Paris dissipation. Mortimer, in his turn, related his own strange story. The reader already knows most of its gloomy, but only a little of its bright side. To complete this last, a few lines will suffice.

Thornton and Clara's marriage had taken place at the British embassy in the month of August, and bride and bridegroom were on the eve of starting for Cypress Hall, accompanied, of course, by Mr. and Mrs. Aveling, when they received very alarming tidings from Scutari. Lavinia had been struck down by cholera. Thornton forthwith proposed that they should go to Scutari. "We shall thus realize your former plan," said he to Clara, "and enter actively into that partnership in good works, which we have agreed that our united life should be. If we arrive too late — which God forbid! — to be of use to our dear young friend, we may be in time, at all events, to do some little good to others."

Mrs. Thornton wanted no persuasion, she had had the very same thought. Dr. Ternel, consulted upon this project, approved of it warmly. A poet like Mr. Aveling could not but have his fancy tickled by the prospect of a journey to the East. Mrs. Aveling had no will but her husband's will; in short, the quatuor embarked at Marseilles instead of at Boulogne, and had the great consolation, on arriving at Scutari, to find Lavinia out of danger, and fast recovering.

Within a few miles of the general hospital, where Lavinia lay, was an untenanted country-house, the pro-

perty of an English merchant, who preferred remaining for the present in Constantinople. This villa, tolerably well furnished, the proprietor had willingly let to Thornton; and as soon as it could be safely done, the exhausted convalescent had been conveyed thither.

The general hospital, just mentioned above, it is scarcely necessary to explain, was not the same as that into whose court we have just introduced the reader, the common appellation of which was barrack hospital, and distant about half a mile from the general hospital. In this last it was that Lavinia had been on duty when taken ill; and to it, save an occasional visit to the other on special business, Thornton and his party had confined their charitable exertions. This was how it had happened, that neither Paolo, nor Salvator, nor Clelia, inmates long before Paolo of the barrack hospital, had ever met Thornton.

"Are you able for a short hour's ride?" asked Mortimer of Paolo, when their mutual explanations were over; "but I forgot you are no rider."

"I can ride pretty well now," answered Paolo reddening; "I have paid dear enough for my instruction."

"But are you sure it will not over-fatigue you?" insisted Thornton.

"Quite sure — I consider myself all but well."

"The road, if road it can be called, is so abominably bad, that it admits of no carriage; but we may make a leisurely ride of it. I know that my wife will not be satisfied unless you go to see her and her friend directly. What do you say, shall I come for you to-

morrow morning at ten? Will that suit you? I will accompany you back in the evening."

"I see, I am doomed always to be a trouble to you," said Paolo.

"Trouble!" repeated Mortimer, "that is a word which won't do between you and me. I am going to re-assert all my rights as Mentor, my dear Telemachus, I give you fair warning," and with this kindly threat Mortimer took his departure.

Paolo had not a wink of sleep that night, and we might bet a good sum, safe to win, that his were not the only pair of eyes of our acquaintance, which, within the circuit of less than a hundred miles, obstinately refused to close in slumber.

With military precision, Thornton arrived at the barrack hospital at ten next morning; Paolo in a moment was in the saddle, and off they went. The road was execrable, Paolo did not find it out — the prospect was bewitching, he was blind to it — Thornton spoke — he was deaf to his words. Sight, hearing, sensations, were all engrossed by one image, Lavinia; one thought, he was about to see her again. His friend understood this state, and respected it, maintaining silence for a time; but when within half an hour of their destination, he forced Paolo's attention from Lavinia to Lavinia's history.

Paolo listened eagerly enough now, to Mortimer's account of her altered circumstances, how it had come out, shortly after Mrs. Jones's death that Lavinia was not Mr. Jones's niece nor in any way related to him, but the child of a poor weaver, which out of interested motives had been substituted for the real Lavinia Jones;

how, on discovering this, Lavinia had left Mr. Jones's house to seek by her own exertions to support herself, and how it was in the course of such endeavours, that she had been brought in contact with the present Mrs. Thornton; how at last the consequence of this meeting had been that the two young women had volunteered to go to the East, whither, however, Lavinia alone had gone, her companion remaining behind in Paris for Thornton's sake.

Thornton made no mention of the circumstances, which had obliged Lavinia to quit Mr. Jones's house, in order not to give his friend gratuitous pain. He also withheld another fact, viz. that Lavinia's parents had never been married. This was another secret, and of so delicate a nature, that Thornton did not feel justified in divulging it without the express permission of the person it concerned.

"It was all for the dear girl's good," wound up Thornton; "she is come out of her trials a new and a charming creature. Thrice blessed the man who may call her his own."

Paolo did not speak on this hint, and the rest of the ride passed in unbroken silence.

Two ladies were sitting in the porch of the villa, when the riders dismounted, neither of them Lavinia. These two ladies, so like each other that they could not be supposed other than two sisters, and a tall, rather absorbed-looking gentleman, with the most shaggy and disordered of natural wigs, came forward to shake hands with Paolo, and, taking possession of him, half led, half carried him into a sitting-room, forced him, in spite of

his protestations that he was not in the least tired, to stretch himself out at full length on a sofa, covered him with shawls, and overpowered him with consommés, wines, kind looks, and kindest inquiries.

Paolo was still panting under this avalanche of cordiality, when Thornton appeared, leading in Lavinia.

"Here is our other interesting invalid," he said; "I think there is no need of any introduction."

The meeting between the two was such, as from their respective situations, and the circumstances under which they met, might have been anticipated; full of repressed emotion, and painful embarrassment. Mrs. Thornton was not slow in coming to the rescue; no sooner had they shaken hands without a word, than she passed her arm round Lavinia's waist, and led her to a seat, while Mrs. Aveling recommenced pressing on Paolo, who, on Lavinia's entrance, had jumped up from the couch, the expediency of lying down again, and allowing himself to be covered up. But this time he stoutly and successfully resisted her persuasions.

Paolo was the hero of the moment, the centre of the general interest and curiosity. He had to tell over again the story of his wound, and of the loss of his arm, of his illness in Paris, to describe the Prosper family, and all their kindness, and to explain what had led him to think of volunteering for the Crimea — a dangerous topic this last, and one on which the presence of the ladies forced him to some concealments. After this came Mr. Aveling with his never-ending inquiries about Rome, often interrupted by Thornton's, about some point of Paolo's recent life, as to which the good gentleman's curiosity was not easily satisfied.

She who ought to have had most to ask was the least forward to put questions. Lavinia spoke little, and the little she did say had no reference to the past; on the contrary, she took care to avoid any allusion to it. She expressed her pleasure in knowing that Clelia was so near, and said how glad she should be to see her again. Though by this time Paolo's and Lavinia's manner to one another had become natural and friendly enough, there was still a shade of reserve and constraint in it. Her eyes never rested on his, nor his on hers, with that full direct long glance, which penetrates beneath the surface — their glances glided over each other's, as if both were on their guard.

The change, which little more than a twelvemonth had effected in their appearance, a change rendered still more striking by Paolo's military dress, and Lavinia's garb of a sister of charity, might to some extent have accounted, had there been no other reason, for the difficulty they experienced in resuming anything of their former familiarity.

Lavinia was still beautiful, perhaps more beautiful than ever, but her beauty had assumed a different character to that he formerly admired. Sorrow, reflection, and the habit of gentle and lofty thoughts, had softened, and, as it were, spiritualized her countenance, had impressed on it a calm serenity and dignity, which made her quite a new being.

Paolo was not less altered on his side: the features of the youth had ripened and settled into those of the man, and repentance and humility had breathed a new spirit into them. The experience he had had of life and of himself, had sobered and subdued his manner. Add

to this, his paleness and touching infirmity, and a complete transformation was the consequence.

But there was another reason than that of their outward change, for their looking ill at ease, and on their guard; and this was that they were actually on their guard. Paolo and Lavinia had so far profited by the lessons they had received, as to be strongly impressed with the conviction of being each unworthy of the other, and accordingly in duty bound to renounce each other. It was this preconception, which had made their first meeting so full of reticence, and so deep-rooted was it, that their first impulse, had they followed it, would have been to fall at each other's feet. How could she, the silly thing of yesterday, the outcast of to-day, ever lift up her eyes to him, the austere youth, the hero, the martyr? How could he, the fallen idealist, the impure sinner, the intentional *felo-de-se*, ever aspire to her as she now was, purified by trial, sanctified by self-sacrifice? Hence their studious attention, their vigilance, not to say or do anything which might be construed to imply the assertion of presumptuous claims, forfeited and abandoned for ever. And from this study, this vigilance, arose that constraint, hastily interpreted on both parts as the sign of altered feelings.

The full moon shone on the two friends' ride back to the hospital — a light so calm, so sweet, so melancholy, that Paolo could willingly have wept. It made him think of the night of the ball at Torlonia's, and of Thornton's bitter confidences about the very woman who now formed his crown of bliss.

Mingled were the impressions, which the Roman brought back from his visit — regret and discouragement.

ment on one hand, unbounded admiration and sympathy on the other. Paolo was not a man to breathe the same atmosphere with such a better order of beings as the two sisters, without carrying away with him some of its elevating spirit.

"Well may you call yourself the luckiest fellow in creation," he burst forth enthusiastically; "Mrs. Thornton is an angel, and Mrs. Aveling is another."

"And Lavinia, pray what title is she to receive?" inquired Mortimer, half jocosely, yet not without some anxiety.

"She is worthy of her friends, and that is saying everything," was Paolo's reply.

"Then you agree with me that thrice blessed will be the man who gains that prize?"

"Surely; but he must be hold who aspires so high."

"I don't quite seize your meaning," observed Mortimer.

"My meaning, however, is clearly stated," said Paolo. "Where is the man worthy of her?"

"Yet I once knew a young rogue, who had the audacity to think himself worthy of her," laughed the Englishman.

"So did I," proceeded Paolo, "but she was not then what she is now; and the silly rogue you allude to, though presumptuous, was nevertheless pure and possessed of all his limbs, whereas he is now humble, stained, and a cripple."

"H—m! but is not humility after all a potent recommendation to the choicest of the fair sex?" asked Thornton. "And those you style cripples, when crippled from certain causes, are they not apt to look only the more

interesting in their eyes? to say nothing of the occasion for devotedness which such cases afford. And as for past sins, women are for ever ready to bestow forgiveness, and to render good for evil. Am I not myself a case in point?"

"Yes," said Paolo, "but there are sins and sins."

"I'll lay you a hundred to one," returned Thornton, "that your sins are easily forgiven. Will you commission me to make your confession to Lavinia?"

"Do," answered Paolo; "till that is done, I shall feel as if I were playing the hypocrite with her; but, above all, extenuate nothing."

"I promise you I will not; but now, suppose she passes a sponge over the past — wipes it all out."

"Tempter!" cried Paolo; "why try to lull my conscience with fallacious hopes?"

Thornton had a ready answer on his lips, but he gulped it down. He remembered in time, that Paolo did not yet know all Lavinia's story, and he judged it better not to push the subject further, until he had spoken to Lavinia.

A curiously analogous conversation was passing at the same moment between Mrs. Thornton and Lavinia, with similar but yet more definite results. "Never, whatever her feelings might be," said Lavinia, "no, not for worlds, would she fasten her disgrace on an honourable man."

Thornton's horses, what with visitors and messengers, had a sorry time of it for the next ten days. Merry Salvator obtained a great success with the English family; quiet Clelia, perhaps, even a greater, especially with Lavinia. The Roman girl not seldom car-

ried away morsels of comfort, which she bestowed in certain desponding quarters. She even once went so far as to be guilty of a great indiscretion, by revealing that an old pencil sketch, dated Rome, September, and signed P. M., a sketch of Mrs. Jones and Lavinia, and which somehow or other had accompanied the latter to the Crimea, occupied a prominent place on the walls of the young lady's bedroom. Nor was it long before Thornton reported that the revelations of Paolo's shortcomings in Paris, had been received in a most Christian spirit. Under the many gentle incitements to courage he received, the young man's sense of his unworthiness of the great prize began to lose something of its intensity, and hope to revive in his breast. Nevertheless, there was but a trifling amendment in the situation; the same painful restraint marred the pleasure of the unavowed lovers' intercourse.

In this awkward position of affairs, Mr. and Mrs. Thornton laid their wise heads together to find some means of producing a crisis.

"These two children adore each other," quoth Mortimer, "and are pining away, and making themselves miserable from the absurd notion, that neither is deserving of the other. How are we to get such nonsense out of their heads?"

"No one," said Clara, "can put it out of Lavinia's head but Signor Paolo; and as for Signor Paolo, I believe you are the only one to manage him. You must begin by him."

"I am ready to do anything," replied the husband; "but before further urging him to come to the point, I think it indispensable that he should be informed of

the circumstance, on which Lavinia lays" such a preposterous weight, and which I have kept from him till now."

"Why should we not outrun discretion for once," said Mrs. Thornton, "and take upon ourselves the responsibility, without distressing Lavinia by asking her consent? Let him know everything; and if the bar sinister in her escutcheon makes no difference in his feelings, why, then tell him that it is that, and that alone, which causes Lavinia's reserve towards him, and that I, Clara Thornton, know she loves him devotedly."

In pursuance of this plan, as Thornton was riding with Paolo the next day towards the villa, the Englishman said,

"Suppose there were some blot on Lavinia's birth, would that modify your views with regard to her?"

"How can you ask such an absurd question?" said Paolo. "No more than if you were to tell me, she was the heiress of the mightiest monarch in Europe. How can one be made responsible for an accident independent of one's will, and consequently excluding either merit or demerit? Whether Lavinia is the daughter of a Prince, or the child of a poor artisan, can that alter the essence of her being, make her less or more good, change her one iota from the lovely, blessed creature she is?"

"Certainly not," said Thornton. "Well, then, as you have doubtless already guessed from my question, there is a stigma attached to the dear girl's birth. Her parents were never married; and now you have the key to the reserve she maintains toward you. In her inno-

cence she fancies that some disgrace attaches to her, and makes her unworthy of you; but, believe me, her happiness depends as much on you as yours on her. It is for you to overcome her scruples, Paolo."

"And so help me God, I will try," exclaimed Paolo with fervour. "If I succeed, and she accepts me, then I am blessed indeed; if not, I go by the steamer that leaves to-morrow."

Lavinia and Mrs. Thornton were sitting at work in a pleasant room over the porch; thither Thornton led Paolo whispering, —

"Now or never, I'll pave the way for you;" and going towards the ladies, he added aloud, "I advise you, ladies, to lay violent hands upon this traitor, who meditates a flight."

"Oh! Signor Paolo," remonstrated Clara in painful and unfeigned surprise, "surely you are not really going away?" Lavinia did not speak, but all colour left her cheek.

"I may possibly have to go. I am not sure yet," faltered Paolo, almost choked by emotion. "My going or staying will depend on — Miss Lavinia."

"On me?" cried Lavinia in sudden alarm.

"Yes, on you," pursued Paolo, now speaking with great resolution. "I have a petition to make, on the issue of which much more is at stake than my going or staying — I mean the whole happiness or unhappiness of my life. Lavinia, mine is a most ambitious request, and yet made in all the humility of my heart." Saying this, he knelt down on both knees, and took her two hands in his. "Lavinia, will you undertake to

make me worthy of you, by bestowing on me the blessing of your companionship through life?"

Overcome by contending emotions, with eyes averted from his pleading ones, Lavinia cried in a broken voice, —

"Pray, Signor Paolo, spare me — it is impossible — you don't know —"

"I know this," resumed Paolo passionately, "that there stands between you and me a prejudice of yours, which I am here on my knees to remove. Lavinia, I entreat you, let me have the benefit of my long-cherished opinions, whatever others may think. I don't make them for this present emergency. Long, long ago, you heard me say, that merit or demerit were strictly personal, and that the transmission of a badge of honour or of dishonour to such as had done nothing to deserve the one or the other, was the acme of absurdity in my eyes; wrong or right, what I thought then I think now. Oh! Lavinia, Lavinia, don't sacrifice a loving heart to a mere misconception on your part. Trust me, my whole life shall be spent in proving to you, the high sense I have of the great boon I am asking from you.

Lavinia, for all answer, burst into a great fit of tears. And now Thornton and his wife, the greatly moved witnesses of this scene, joined their arguments to Paolo's entreaties.

The struggle was long and obstinate, but love had the best of it at last, and Paolo from that day became an inmate of the villa.

Towards the end of December our whole party of friends left Scutari for Turin, whither Clelia and Salvatore had long preceded them. It was in the capital

of Piedmont, that the double marriage of Paolo and Lavinia, and of Salvator and Clelia, took place on the same day, and at the same church. Thus came to be fulfilled Salvator's fantastic anticipation about his own and his friend's wedding day, and thus our performance is at an end, to the satisfaction, we hope, at least of the lovers of gay finales. A tale which winds up with three marriages ought to be as good as three vaudevilles.

MORE LAST WORDS.

Paolo has had a house built after his own design on the Lago Maggiore, between Intra and Pallanza. It is as unpretending as its owner, but spacious and in a lovely situation. The garden in front stretches to the edge of the lake, and there is a hillock behind planted with Italian pines. A suite of rooms on the second story are exclusively destined for the Thorntons and Avelings, and at the top of the house, adjoining Paolo's atelier, are two rooms fitted up for Clelia and Salvator.

Paolo has taken to painting again, and can do so without inconvenience, thanks to a most skilfully contrived artificial arm. Great as his excellence is, his beau ideal still, as of yore, keeps flying before him, just beyond his reach; but he takes his disappointment more philosophically now, that he has, according to his own account, secured the beau ideal of a wife. Two little charming impediments in the shape of a boy and a girl, arriving in reasonable succession, came in the way for some time of the yearly visits, the Mancinis, according to agreements, were to pay to Cypress Hall and Owlscombe; and therefore the inmates of Owlscombe and Cypress Hall had to obey the proverb descended to us from Mahomet. But nothing has happened lately

to prevent our hero and heroine's journey to Dorsetshire.

The Thorntons and Avelings inhabit by turns, but always together, Owlcombe and Cypress Hall, that is when not in the Mancini Villa on the Lago Maggiore. Living quietly and chiefly for themselves, and not for their neighbours, they are rather unpopular with the gentry around, but very popular with the cottagers, especially with the needy and sick. Mr. Aveling has just published with great success his new poem, *The Gladiator*, conceived and begun in 1856, at Rome, whither he and his wife went, and made some considerable stay, after the marriage of the Mancinis and the Giglis.

Salvator and Clelia are settled at Turin. Salvator is one of the scene painters at the Carignano Theatre, and Clelia has passed her examination as a school-mistress and teacher for one of the government schools. Husband and wife earn enough to be able to economize, and the vivacious little man has visions already of a villa of his own near that of Paolo. Whenever he or Clelia have a few spare moments, they run down to Lago Maggiore, where they are always welcome.

Prosper and Prudence are no longer to be found on the Quai Montebello, they have been promoted to an omnibus bureau near the Madeleine, where they labour on in unaltered contentment. Whenever the Mancinis pass through Paris on their way to England or back, they never fail to visit these their Parisian friends, and great are the rejoicings on these occasions.

Benoît has made over his douche and vapour department to a younger man, who pays him a pension of two francs and a half a day, and the abdicated

monarch of the bath has migrated to his godson's new neighbourhood. He makes himself useful in many ways, attends the youngsters to and from school, and takes them on holidays for long walks.

Pelissier, alias Du Genre, has been as good as his word. The moment the Italian question was *posée pour tout de bon*, to use his own expression, he volunteered as a common soldier, and went through the whole campaign with great bravery, and lucky fellow, returned to Paris without a scratch; his only regret being, as he wrote to Paolo, that he was stopped just when he was beginning to take to a soldier's life.

Mr. Jones has married a young and handsome lady, and is full of contentment at the birth of a long coveted son and heir. His wealth and influence are still on the increase, and literally he has nothing to wish for but a change in his name. We see no other remedy for that but a peerage. Who knows? Stranger things have happened.

Lady Augusta, now Countess Terrol, is still Lavinia's most intimate friend, and their correspondence goes on as regularly as in the days of the diary from Rome. Her mother, Lady Willingford, also retains a maternal interest in her former *protégée*.

As to the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos, the latest news of her ladyship is, that she rents a villa on the Lake of Como, and swims and races and shoots and sings there, with a select circle of bipeds and quadrupeds about her, as of yore in the Villa Torralba.





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